DISCOURSES

ON

SPECIAL SUBJECTS.

By WILLIAM PARKER, D.D.

VOLUME I.

SEVERAL DISCOURSES ON SPECIAL SUBJECTS,

PREACHED BEFORE THE

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

AND UPON

OTHER OCCASIONS.

BY WILLIAM PARKER, D.D.
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TO THE

QUEEN's

MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

MADAM,

THE Attention ſhewn by your MAJESTY, in conjunction with that of our gracious SOVEREIGN, to the important intereſts of religion, demands the warmeſt acknowledgments of every friend to virtue and piety, and our happy eſtabliſhment.

Upon this ground it is, theſe two volumes aſpire to the honour of admiſſion upon your MAJESTY's table.

Their only pretenſion is, theſe Diſcourſes were all originally publiſhed by requeſt; ſeveral of them by authority of the Vice-Chancellor and Heads of Houſes of the Univerſity of Oxford; the view of thoſe who requeſted the publication was, that they might be uſeful to the world.

However this may be, they have been ſo favourably received, that being publiſhed ſeparately, and ſome of them having paſſed through different editions, they are now all grown ſo ſcarce, that the Author has been ſolicited to collect and reprint them together.

To theſe he would have added more, as he hath frequently been deſired; but the conſtant extenſive employments of his preſent laborious ſituation would not allow him the time he could have wiſhed for the reviſal.

The firſt Offering of the preſent collection is made with all humble ſubmiſſion to your MAJESTY, as a teſtimony of the Author's higheſt reſpect and veneration.

That your MAJESTIES may long live to bleſs and reciprocally enjoy the bleſſings of

of your people, and the rewards of your own inherent virtues in this life, antecedent to the glories of a better, is the conſtant and ardent prayer of,

MADAM,

your MAJESTY's

moſt dutiful and obedient

Subject and Servant,

Feb. 23, 1790.

WILLIAM PARKER.

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DISCOURSE I.

The Nature of the Call and Miſſion to the ſacred Miniſtry conſidered. Preached before the Univerſity of Oxford, *March* 2. 1745-6.

MATT. IX. 38.

Pray Ye therefore the Lord of the Harveſt, that He will ſend forth Labourers into his Harveſt.

THE enemies to our religion, and conſequently to the preachers of it, among other objections made to the ſacred order, call in queſtion, and ridicule the authority of their miſſion. The ſolemn rite of ordination has been repreſented as nothing more than the grant of a common

licence to exerciſe a certain calling. It has been ſcornfully aſk'd, "what does the hand "of the biſhop convey? or how does it ap- "pear that it conveys any thing? What "alteration for the better is to be found in "the perſon, the endowments, or the ſpirit "of the party ordain'd? What ſpiritual gift "confer'd? How does it appear that he has "any moral ſufficiency which he had not "before?"

The *call* of the Holy Ghoſt is ridiculed into a ſordid proſpect of power and wealth, or the low neceſſity of a maintenance. Every vice or bad example of particular perſons in the miniſtry is induſtriouſly ſelected, if not injuriouſly aggravated, and made an argument againſt the ſanctity of the whole order. Whilſt every attempt in the miniſter of Chriſt to vindicate his office is loaded with the opprobrious names of ſpiritual pride and prieſtcraft.[a] Hard fate of thoſe who are called to be *ſtewards of the myſteries of God*, that to retain the character of an humble modeſty, they muſt be *aſhamed* of their commiſſion! that to ſecure themſelves from the cenſure and ridicule of men, they muſt be perfidious to their maſter, and diſown his credentials!

[a] See the Independent Whig, No. 10. 17. 41.

There

There are indeed men of late gone out from among us, (I cannot ſay that they are of us) who with a view to ſupport their character, too highly magnify their calling: who pretend to fuller directions, and ſtronger impulſes of the Spirit, than our religion warrants, or the neceſſities of the church require. Such defenders, as theſe, are rather enemies to the cauſe which they mean to ſupport; and by aſſuming too much, prejudice their claim to *that*, which they might otherwiſe have a juſt title to. At the ſame time an unhappy pride has taught them to deſpiſe or pity thoſe, who cannot feel ſuch impulſes of the Spirit, as they pretend to be more immediately directed by, in diſturbing the peace, the rules, and eſtabliſhments of ſociety.

Amidſt theſe malicious cenſures, this bitterneſs of clamour and ridicule on the one hand; theſe vain and arrogant pretenſions on the other; the faithful ambaſſador of Chriſt will not be afraid to maintain his character: but at the ſame time he will ſtudy to recommend it by the ornament of a meek and quiet ſpirit. Though he loves not contention, yet he will not be beat out of his ſtation by the violent aſſaults of his adverſaries, nor laught out of it by the

ſmartneſs of their wit. But let the man of God lift up his head amidſt his enemies that *have ſet themſelves againſt him round about*, with a dignity that becomes his office: let his deportment indeed be *humble*, but not *mean:* condeſcending to anſwer the ſeveral ſcruples, and yielding ſomewhat to the infirmities of his hearers; but not ſlaviſhly ſubmitting to their humours, or their prejudices. In ſhort though he be ſtudious with a true chriſtian meekneſs to diſcharge every office of good-nature, and with all the benevolent humility of his bleſſed Lord, be ready even *to waſh the diſciples feet*, yet he muſt not ſuffer himſelf to be trampled under them. God almighty for the promotion of his own glory in the general welfare of his people, hath committed to him a ſacred character, and it is his duty, for the ſake of that people, both by argument and behaviour, to ſupport the dignity of it. Since by every infringement made upon his character, it's intended influence over Mankind will ſuffer.

It will not therefore I hope be thought foreign to the purpoſes of this audience, in which there are many preparing themſelves to become future inſtructors and ornaments of the church of Chriſt;

Firſt,

Firſt, to ſtate the true nature of the *miniſterial call*, and to ſhew in what ſenſe the church propoſes this queſtion to every candidate for the ſacred office; "Do You truſt "that you are inwardly moved by the Holy "Ghoſt; that you are called according to "the will of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt to take "upon you this office and miniſtration?"

Secondly, to ſtate the nature of the *miniſterial miſſion*, and ſhew in what ſenſe theſe words are to be underſtood in the form of ordaining prieſts, "Receive the Holy Ghoſt "for the office and work of a Prieſt in the "church of God."

Thirdly, to obviate ſome objections which have been rais'd againſt the form of ordination uſed by our church. And then,

Fourthly, to conclude with an inference or two.

Firſt then I am to ſtate the nature of the *miniſterial call*. And I ſhall beg leave to enter upon this head by propoſing a previous queſtion or two to our adverſary about the *reaſonableneſs* of ſuch a *call*. What abſurdity then can he find in this tranſaction that the all-wiſe God by his providence ſhould

preſide in the government of the *moral*, as well as of the *natural* world? that He ſhould be the ſame God of order in both? Nay does there not ſeem to be more reaſon for his providential interpoſition in the *former* than in the *latter*? foraſmuch as the parts of the *natural* world when once digeſted into order, cannot but preſerve that order: they cannot but perform their preſcribed motions, as long as that power continues to be impreſs'd upon them by which they firſt began to move. But the *moral* world may *corrupt* itſelf, and introduce diſorder and confuſion into the ſyſtem of intellectual agents. Why then ſhould it be thought unreaſonable that God ſhould ſend and commiſſion proper perſons to reſtore that regularity it had loſt; to aſſiſt reaſon in her combat againſt paſſion; and when the traces of virtue are well nigh totally effaced, to draw the lines of it afreſh upon the mind?

Not that God acts *ordinarily* in this caſe by irreſiſtible impulſe, which would ſo far deſtroy the free-agency of the perſon commiſſion'd; nor by *ſenſible* operations, which might detract from it; which might tend to introduce pride and preſumption in thoſe who felt ſuch manifeſt marks of his favour; deſpondency in thoſe who felt them not; which

which in ſhort might make his interpoſitions too frequent, and thereby leſſen the efficacy of them. But the means whereby He actuates men, are ſuch as concur and coincide with the courſe of their own natural reaſon. So that the operations of his *Spirit* in the *moral* world are like thoſe of the *wind* in the *natural*; *thou heareſt the ſound thereof and perceiveſt its effects, but canſt not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth.*

There ſeems then to be little ground in reaſon for thoſe arrogant pretenſions of our modern enthuſiaſts to fuller, and even *ſenſible* directions of the ſpirit; though it may be very difficult to convince them of their error. For indeed we cannot argue againſt the *ſenſes* of men; and it would be in vain to affirm to them that they do *not* feel, what they poſitively aſſert they *do*. But let theſe men take heed leſt the vanity of a conceited heart impoſe upon them, and delude them into falſe perſuaſions: leſt they *feel*, what they ought *not* to feel, a ſpirit of error and preſumption inſtead of the Spirit of God. For God ordinarily acts upon men in a manner conſiſtent with their nature, as they are free-agents. He directs *brutes* by inſtinct, of which alone they are capable: but he

leads *man* by reaſonable ſuggeſtions, which are *the cords of a man*.

It may be aſk'd then; If *this* be the caſe; if we cannot ordinarily diſtinguiſh between the ſuggeſtions of our own *natural reaſon*, and the dictates of the *divine Spirit*; how can a man ſatisfy himſelf that he is *inwardly call'd* by the Holy Ghoſt to the office of miniſtering in the church of God?

In order to ſatisfy this queſtion, we may obſerve, that the all-wiſe God ever adapts his means to the end propoſed. In common *ordinary* caſes he makes uſe of common *ordinary* means. Where the end propoſed is *extraordinary*, the means will be proportion'd to it. He has ſometimes thought it expedient to make more immediate and expreſs manifeſtations of himſelf to ſome of the ſons of men. But in theſe caſes He has always given them ſufficient evidence of theſe divine communications of himſelf to them; and has enabled them to prove the reality of them to others by ſome *extraordinary* powers. Such as were thoſe miraculous powers given to the apoſtles to prove to them and to mankind the reality of their commiſſion, and promote the reception of Chriſtianity in the world. But where the end propoſed is nothing ſingular in itſelf, and

ordinary

ordinary means may be ſufficient, it would be abſurd to wait for any *ſingular* communications, or *extraordinary* direction. And in ſuch caſes we may aſk, how we can conceive the Spirit of God to direct a moral agent to any particular end, in an *ordinary* way, more clearly, than by endowing him with proper abilities to promote that end; by placing opportunities in his way of improving thoſe abilities; and by giving him an inclination to employ them in the purſuit of this end? An inclination of the will then may be the ſecret operation of God's Holy Spirit upon it: but then we muſt conclude, that the perſon ſo inclined ſhall alſo find in himſelf abilities equal to the purſuit.

When a man therefore can ſatisfy himſelf, that he is endow'd with faculties qualifying him for a due diſcharge of the miniſterial office; when he has had a proper education to improve thoſe abilities, which the God of nature hath given him; and has an inclination to undertake the ſacred charge, and thereby dedicate his abilities to the promotion of virtue and religion in the world; he may ſafely conclude that the Lord hath called him; that it is agreeable to the will of that Being who ſent him into the world, (as far as can be diſcern'd from the general

courſe

courſe of his directing providence) that he ſhould enter upon this holy function. Let him offer himſelf to a ruling paſtor in the church of Chriſt for an *outward calling* or *commiſſion* thereunto.

But yet it is not to be expected that theſe qualifications ſhould be equal in *all*. Neither can we ſafely argue from ſome few infirmities, that the perſon who labours under them, is thereby abſolutely diſqualified, and cannot be duly called according to the will of God to the work of the miniſtry. Though *Moſes* was not eloquent, but *ſlow of ſpeech*, and *of ſlow tongue*, yet was he for other reaſons called by an all-wiſe God to plead the cauſe of his people before *Pharaoh*, and afterwards to govern a ſtiff-necked and rebellious nation. *He who ſeeth not as man ſeeth* may obſerve proper qualifications in men, which *we* do not diſcover. Neither does the ſtate of the church require the ſame, or equal abilities in all. He may be able to *inſtruct*, who is not eloquent to *perſuade*. He may be able to deliver the plain doctrines of chriſtianity to an illiterate audience, who is not qualified to contend with the *diſputers of this world*, to baffle the aſſaults, or detect the wiles of ſcepticiſm. Men's natural abilities are not therefore to be admitted as the *ſole* criterion

of

of their vocation; provided they are not *totally* deficient. For *this* we may ſafely conclude, that an infinitely-wiſe God cannot have intended any man for *that* office, which He has given him *no* abilities to diſcharge. But then abilities are relative; and therefore, in particular caſes, it would be an arrogant preſumption in any man to fix the point where the diſqualification of inability begins; except Him, whoſe province it is to examine, and to whoſe diſcretion it is left to admit perſons into the ſacred office.

The ſame abilities are not required in every age and country alike. He might appear to great advantage in one age or nation, who perhaps is eſteem'd but an illiterate perſon in another. An age of learning and refinement expects, that it's teachers ſhould be more advanc'd in literature. For the knowledge of the teacher muſt always bear a proportion to that of the perſon whom he inſtructs. Even in this preſent age and country, wherein *we* live, ſuch a degree of learning may only fit a man for the rank of a common hearer, as in the darker ages of monkiſh ſuperſtition, or in the midſt of a more ignorant uncivilized people, might have qualified him to become a teacher.

Neither

Neither are we always to form a judgment from the turn of education, or the particular bent of a man's more youthful ſtudies. The firſt *rudiments* of literature are univerſal, and common to the ſeveral learned profeſſions; ſo that a perſon may be at liberty afterwards, if he ſees good reaſon for it, to apply thoſe principles of ſcience to *one* profeſſion, which he at firſt imbibed, with a view of directing them to *another*. But it will always be the care of the *faithful* governing paſtor of the church, not to make prieſts of the *loweſt* of the people, of thoſe who have had *no* liberal or literate education at all; and who may *come crouching to be put into one of the prieſt's offices only, that they may eat a piece of bread.*

The beſt and ſafeſt criterion of a *divine call*, may perhaps be thought a ſtrong *natural inclination* to promote virtue, and religion in the world, under the ſanction and authority of a *divine commiſſion*. And yet even *this* may not be equally ſtrong in all; much muſt be allow'd to the different complexions and conſtitutions of men. And God may ſpeak as clearly in the *ſtill ſmall voice*, as through the fuller vent and fire of paſſion. Since it is not always the warmeſt inclination which is capable of doing the moſt

moſt good, but that which judges calmly, and ſedately, of the propereſt ſeaſons of addreſs, and then opportunely applies itſelf to the paſſions and underſtandings of men, when the avenues of truth are open.

A late [a] writer inſiſts much upon a *fervent love of Chriſt*, as another neceſſary diſtinct mark of a *divine call*. Which, (whatever idea he may form of it) cannot certainly be better expreſs'd to others, nor perhaps ſo clearly, or ſatisfactorily proved to ourſelves, as by a ſtrong inclination, and ſincere endeavour to promote the religion of Chriſt. And therefore it muſt be included under the general head of *inclination*. For whoever has a fervent love of Chriſt, will naturally endeavour, according to his ſtation, to promote his religion: and whoever is ſincerely inclined to promote *his* religion, may very properly be ſaid in the language of this writer, to *have a love of Chriſt*. It is certain however, that this was all the proof which the *great* ſhepherd of the flock required from his apoſtle St. Peter of his love towards him: [b] *Simon ſon of Jonas loveſt thou me? Feed my ſheep.*

[a] Mr. *Middleton* of *Briſtol* in his Enquiry into the Inward Call to the Miniſtry. [b] John 21. 16.

The

The ſame may be ſaid of *that warm and affectionate zeal for the good of ſouls*, which this author would make another eſſential mark of a *divine call*. For whoever ſhall be ſincerely inclined to direct and conduct men in the ways of eternal happineſs, by a faithful diſcharge of the *miniſterial function*, may ſurely be ſaid, in the beſt and moſt proper ſenſe of the word, to have an *affectionate zeal for the good of their ſouls*; and therefore *this* alſo may very fairly be reduced under the general head of *inclination*.

But then further, to this *inward* evidence of the ſpirit, there is, (for the ſatisfaction of ſociety, for the preſervation of order and decency in the church, according to the inſtitution of Chriſt and his apoſtles) required the addition of an *outward calling*. Without *this*, how can the people, to whom the prieſt offers himſelf as a guide, be ſatisfied, that he has any title to direct them? How can the ignorant be ſatisfied, that they may ſafely receive knowledge at his lips? How can the church be ſatisfied, that many vain pretenders ſhall not aſſume to themſelves the ſacred office, who have no abilities to diſcharge it, no inclination to any thing but the temporal advantages which may enſue? Laſtly, how can the man himſelf be ſatisfied,

fied, that he does not confide in greater qualifications than he is really poſſeſs'd of? As long as any offices have certain ſtipends annext, many unfit and unworthy perſons will intrude themſelves if they can, for the ſake of the profits that accrue; without any conſcience of their abilities, or inclination to perform the *duties* of thoſe offices. With good reaſon then, will every wiſely conſtituted ſociety appoint certain guardians of theſe offices, to repel the bold invader, to encourage and admit the ſincere, deſerving candidate. And if this be a prudent caution, where only the *temporal*, or *civil* intereſts of mankind depend upon the performance; ſurely in a matter of more important concern, the *eternal* ſalvation of men, the church does, with no leſs good reaſon, ſubject every candidate for the miniſterial office to the examination of ſuch an holy guardian: ſuch a guardian, whoſe province it is, ſolemnly to enquire of the man himſelf, whether from the diſpoſition of his will, the abilities of his mind, and the tendency of his education, he thinks himſelf call'd, according to the will of God, to this holy undertaking; who is to try whether he appears to be ſo, and according to his apparent qualifications, is either to ſend him forth into this

this *field of harveſt*, or reject his offers. The *outward* calling then is the beſt ſecurity to the people, of the reality of the *inward*; and it would be uncharitable, as well as beyond our province, to judge otherwiſe of the *heart*, where the miniſter is lawfully commiſſion'd in his *outward perſon*, according to the inſtitution of Chriſt and his apoſtles.

And here give me leave to examine a little a principle laid down by, our [a] adverſary, which he ſays, "he will abide by:" but which perhaps may prove a bad ſupport to the weight, which he would lay upon it. He ſays, that "every one who has a *power* "to do good, has a *call* to do good;" and would make this an argument againſt the neceſſity of a formal ordination. In the firſt place, he ſeems to have ſtated his maxim wrong. He ſhould rather have ſaid, that every one who *thinks* he has a *power* to do good, has a *call* to do good. Yet ſurely it by no means is to be granted, that what *he* may take to be *natural power* to do good, in any particular way, is a *lawful right* to do good in that way, or that what he may eſteem a *power* in himſelf, *is* ſuch. He may poſſibly form a wrong judgment of himſelf, and his own abilities. It is no uncommon

[a] The Independent Whig, No. 10.

thing

thing for men to aſpire to offices which they are unfit for. It muſt be allow'd indeed that every one who has a *power* to do good in his *proper ſtation*, has a *right* to do good in it. But it does not from thence follow that every one who thinks he has a power to do good in any *other* ſtation, has thereby a call or commiſſion to quit his *own*, and intrude himſelf into that ſtation.

For putting the maxim as our author ſtates it, and ſuppoſing that he really *has* a power to do good: yet before his maxim can be allow'd, in the latitude to which he means to extend it, he ought to prove, what he takes for granted, that a *power* to do good in any ſtation, ſuperſedes the neceſſity of an *outward commiſſion* to *act* in that ſtation: eſpecially where ſuch commiſſion, according to divine appointment, may be obtain'd upon due application for it.

And we may urge ſtill further, that this maxim proceeds upon a ſuppoſal, which, in his extent of it, is not to be allow'd. For we may deny that a man *has* a power to do good to ſociety in general, by quitting his own proper ſtation at pleaſure, and intruding himſelf into that of others: at leaſt we may queſtion, whether he will not do more harm, by introducing a confuſion of officers, of ranks

and orders of men in ſociety, than he can poſſibly do good, by any accidental ſervices. For, to carry our author's maxim a little further into civil life, a good magiſtrate is, no doubt, one of the greateſt benefits to ſociety. But ſuppoſe every perſon who could flatter himſelf into a perſuaſion, that by the exerciſe of this office, he could do ſome eminent good to the community, ſhould immediately, in conſequence of ſuch a perſuaſion, take upon himſelf authority to iſſue out writs, and to ſit in judgment; or ſuppoſe any one who thought himſelf ſingularly well ſkill'd in the art of war, ſhould immediately commence a general, enliſt forces, and begin to diſcipline an army, without any commiſſion from the ſtate in which he lived, what diſorder would ſuch proceedings ſoon produce in it? What contrariety of laws? What oppoſition of military diſcipline? In like manner, if every one thought himſelf qualified to do good, by teaching, and miniſtering in the church, were immediately, upon his own authority, permitted to enter upon the taſk, what confuſion of teachers, what contradiction of doctrines, what viciſſitude of miniſters, what uncertainty of religious rites, would ſoon enſue therein?

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Our Saviour therefore, who was intended to guide us, by his example, as well as to redeem us, by his death, though *fill'd*, from the beginning, *with all the fulneſs of God*, and therefore wanting not abilities, yet did not enter upon the office of preaching, till openly commiſſion'd thereto, by a voice from heaven. It was after *that* time, according to the evangeliſt, that [a] *Jeſus began to preach*. In like manner did He regularly commiſſion his apoſtles, before they undertook their office. *As my father ſent me, ſo ſend I you; receive ye the Holy Ghoſt.* In like manner did they authorize their ſucceſſors in the ſeveral chriſtian churches. Which leads me under my

Second general head, to ſtate the nature of the *miniſterial miſſion*, and enquire in what ſenſe thoſe words are to be underſtood, "Re- "ceive the Holy Ghoſt for the office and "work of a prieſt in the church of God."

And here, I believe, no prudent perſon will attempt to maintain, that the words were intended to convey *moral* ſanctity, or like a *charm* to infuſe any extraordinary illumination into the underſtanding. But, as the

[a] See Mat. 4. 17. compared with Matt. 3. 17.

miniſterial office is an inſtitution of Chriſt, whatever grace or gift is annext, muſt be derived to it, in virtue of that inſtitution. And, as our church prudently adheres to thoſe ſacred rites, which Chriſt hath inſtituted, as the ſureſt means to receive the graces, which He hath promis'd, the beſt way to diſcover what the church intends by theſe words, in her form of ordination, will be to enquire what was convey'd in them, by Chriſt, to his apoſtles.

The *Holy Ghoſt* is frequently uſed in Scripture for ſome *gift* of the Holy Ghoſt, by a common metonymy in ſpeech of the cauſe for the effect. Now we do not read, that this was any *moral* ſanctity; and it is plain from the ſcriptures, that it was not the gift of working miracles: for the extraordinary effuſion of this gift was what they were to wait for afterwards at *Jeruſalem*. In ſhort what conveyance it was which was then made to them, may beſt be diſcover'd from the paſſage itſelf, in which the fact is related. [a] St. *John* informs us, that before our Saviour's aſcent into heaven, the ſame commiſſion which He had received from his Father, He convey'd to his apoſtles. *As my father*

[a] John 20. 21, 22.

ſent

ſent me, even ſo ſend I you. A commiſſion of the ſame authority to preach the goſpel, to found and eſtabliſh a church on earth: a commiſſion as extenſive as the former, except in the inſtance of redeeming mankind by the ſacrifice of Himſelf, to which it could not extend. The evangeliſt proceeds to relate, that *when He had ſaid this, He breathed on them, and ſaid unto them, receive ye the Holy Ghoſt.* The effect of which bleſſing appears, from what follows, to have been power, and authority in the church; for it is immediately ſubjoin'd as a conſequence of it; *Whoſeſoever ſins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whoſeſoever ſins ye retain, they are retained.* This power, and this authority to act, rule, and direct in the church, to admit men into the ſociety of chriſtians, or exclude them out of it, to cenſure or abſolve in it, being manifeſtly a diſpenſation or gift of the Holy Ghoſt, as appears from other paſſages of ſcripture, particularly St. *Paul*'s firſt epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, chap. 12; where the ſeveral gifts of the ſpirit are enumerated; it is therefore ſaid, *receive ye the Holy Ghoſt.*

Now the church cannot certainly mean to confer any *more*, or any *greater* gifts, than what Chriſt himſelf confer'd: a gift of authority to exerciſe the miniſterial function; a

gift of ordinary direction and aid in the performance; a gift of bleſſing to attend, and of confirmation to eſtabliſh, every *miniſterial act*. The *moral character* of the perſon may remain the ſame as it was before, though his *power* and *authority* does not.

But further the words in this form may be conſider'd, not only as an *expreſſion of authority* in the governing paſtor of the church, conveying a *commiſſion*; but likewiſe as a ſolemn *bleſſing* from him, join'd to other prayers, that God would vouchſafe a greater meaſure of his *directing and ſanctifying grace* to the perſon ordain'd. And it is to be hoped, as well as in charity preſumed, that the candidates in general, ſo prepare themſelves in *moral* fitneſs, as that God may be graciouſly inclined to confirm the bleſſing, and to grant the petitions. For it is not to be doubted, but that He who hath promiſed to be with his church unto the end of the world, will grant every thing that ſhall be neceſſary to dignify, adorn, and authoriſe the acts perform'd in it; to aid, countenance, and ſupport the performers; and to effect in general, that the intereſts of this church ſhall be recommended by the moral ſanctity of it's miniſters. In this ſenſe therefore, and no other, a moral or intellectual ſufficiency is the ſubject

ject of the *bleſſing*, which *may*, or *may not*, be convey'd, according to the moral, or intellectual fitneſs of the candidate.

We do not mean to deny, but that God, by the ſecret operation of his Spirit, *does* and *will* grant all neceſſary ſupplies of aid and direction to his faithful miniſters, in the diſcharge of their duty, in the promotion of true religion, in the cultivation of their own perſonal virtue and underſtanding, as well as the improvement of other men: we do not mean to deny, but that He may vouchſafe greater effuſions of his grace to *ſome*, than He affords to *others*; according as the ſeveral exigencies of his church ſhall require. But then we diſclaim all *ſenſible* impulſes upon perſons, from whoſe character nothing *ſingular* is expected: we diſclaim all *extraordinary illuminations*, where no *extraordinary lights* are required: we diſclaim all ſuch *ſupernatural infuſions* of moral ſanctity, as might tend to leſſen our own *perſonal endeavours* after improvement in moral virtue.

The form of ordination then is an outward commiſſion and authority to act. A *licence* it is indeed; but much more than a common *civil licence*. It is a licence from one acting by deputation under Chriſt, for the conveyance of authority reſiding in him, according

to a rite which Chriſt and his apoſtles inſtituted. Let us proceed therefore as we propoſed in the

Third place, to anſwer ſome objections, which have been rais'd againſt the form of ordination uſed by our church.

It has been objected, * that the candidates are obliged to profeſs themſelves inwardly moved by the Holy Ghoſt, to take upon them this office; whilſt it is plain that they are moved only by a proſpect of power and wealth, or the neceſſity of a maintenance. But how does the objector know this? Is he able to ſee into the hearts of men? Or grant that in ſome inſtances this may be true; yet it is againſt all the rules of ſound reaſoning to draw a general concluſion from particular inſtances. A proſpect of preferment or a maintenance, may be a *concurrent* motive, whilſt perhaps it is far from being the *only*, or the *principal* one. And it cannot ſurely be ſaid, that a good proviſion in life, or the view of it, will neceſſarily deſtroy a *natural inclination* to do good. Nay how does the objector know, but it may be ſought more earneſtly on this very account, to enable the

* Independent Whig, No. 17.

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poſſeſſor to become a more extenſive Good to mankind? Wealth and honour *have*, and *will* have an influence over the minds of common people. And if this influence has oftentimes been but too ſucceſsful in promoting vice, why ſhould it not ſometimes be made uſe of in the cauſe of virtue? But how does it neceſſarily follow, that becauſe the young candidate has a provident view to raiſe to himſelf a comfortable ſupport in life, therefore this is the *only* view that he can have? This ſurely muſt, at leaſt, be ſaid to be a very uncharitable way of judging. If in the ſame manner a clergyman ſhould have argued, that the only motive this author could have for ſpreading his writings, was an ambition to make himſelf famous for a ſingular way of thinking, without any regard to truth; he would have been very ready to exclaim much againſt the uncharitableneſs of the clergy in their cenſures.

But further; does a view to a comfortable ſubſiſtence in life, detract any thing from men's *natural abilities* to promote virtue and religion? Or does it obſtruct the effects of a good education? Is it not rather a ſpur to induſtry and improvement in the younger part of life? to a further progreſs in knowledge in the advance of it? For let the free-

thinker

thinker declaim about the diſintereſtedneſs of real virtue, or the enthuſiaſt pretend to what effuſions of the Holy Spirit, what abſtractedneſs from worldly things, he pleaſes; yet whilſt *men* continue to be *men*, they *muſt* be actuated by *human* motives. And it is no abſurdity to ſuppoſe, that the Holy Spirit of God may inwardly concur with, or act upon them by ſuch motives, in the ſupport of religion, as are moſt agreeable to man's nature, and moſt likely to prevail. The parent may deſtine the child for holy orders, with no other view, than becauſe in this way he can make the beſt proviſion for him: yet how does it appear to the free-thinker, that God could have no concern in this deſtination? or that the general courſe of his providence may not have ſo order'd things in the circumſtances of the parent, that he ſhould reſolve thus? The views of the parent may extend themſelves to the child, but may not afterwards be his *only* motives.

But perhaps it may be urged, that his future conduct is a proof of what his former views were; that his aim was not to *feed*, but to *eat of the milk of the flock*; that if he has any inward call, it is made plain by his rapaciouſneſs, from whence it muſt come, not from the Spirit of God, but a ſpirit of avarice.

avarice. But alas! is not every legal purſuit of their juſt rights in the clergy by theſe men ſtiled rapaciouſneſs? And yet, why ſhould not *they* be allow'd the ſame protection of the laws, the ſame ſupports of right and property, ſince they are liable to the ſame wants and neceſſities, with *other men?* As they are compound beings, nature requires, that they ſhould provide for the ſupport of their *own bodies*; as their duty obliges them to look after the *ſouls* of *others*. Unleſs they could diveſt themſelves of this part of their nature, and become purely ſpiritual, they muſt have the ſame appetites after worldly enjoyments, the ſame pleaſure in any addition made to their temporal welfare, as other men. The apoſtles, 'tis true, in the infant ſtate of the church, had no preferments to boaſt of; an argument frequently in the mouths of our enemies. Not indeed that they *courted* poverty, but from the neceſſity of the times they could not *avoid* it. A *perſecuted* church had no rights to ſettle upon it's miniſters. Yet St. *Paul* we ſee making a merit of it to [a] ſome of his converts, that he had taken nothing of *them*, whilſt at the ſame time he owns, that on this very account, he had re-

[a] 2 Cor. 11. 7, 8.

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ceiv'd larger ſtipends of *other churches*. But we may fairly reply againſt our adverſary, from his own way of reaſoning, that if it is poſſible for men to be actuated merely by ſuch motives, it is proper, on this very account, that this queſtion ſhould be propoſed by the church, in order to prevent ſome from appearing, who might have no other call, or intention.

But further; their enſuing conduct is made an evidence againſt the reality of their call; it is urged, that the heart is not mended, but the morals are often worſe, and therefore, the Holy Ghoſt could have no concern in their miſſion. But why ſhould ſome few inſtances be ſingled out, and artfully made an objection againſt the clergy, and the rite of ordination, in general? And let men's original intentions have been ever ſo ſincere; the call of the Holy Ghoſt ever ſo full; the grace confer'd ever ſo certain; yet is it not poſſible for men to fall from grace? or in the language of holy ſcripture, to *receive the grace of God in vain?* What will theſe men ſay to the treachery of *Judas?* To the falſhood of *Peter?* To the cowardice of the *other apoſtles?* Did not one *betray?* Another *deny* his Maſter? Did not all *forſake* Him in the bitter hour? Yet if we believe any thing in

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our religion, we *muſt* believe, that theſe were called to be apoſtles by the Great Author of it, and perſonally ordain'd by Him. The truth is, ordination leaves men *free-agents*, as it found them. And though the man of God is called with an holy calling, yet he is not called to quit his nature. It was never pretended by any ſerious perſon, that the hand of the biſhop was deſigned to act like a *ſpell*, upon the minds of the perſons ordain'd. The character indeed which they bear, and the great commiſſion they receive from thence, are motives to ſtricter holineſs: but ſtill they are *but motives*, not *neceſſary obliging powers*. They are ſuch as may be reſiſted, or over-balanced by other motives. 'Tis no wonder then that in *this*, as well as in all *other* orders of men, there ſhould be ſome who diſhonour the character they bear; but let not the miſ-conduct of a *few* be imputed to *all*.

However, that I may proceed *fourthly*, to draw an inference or two; ſince the conduct of particular perſons in this order, will always by unreaſonable men be made an objection to the whole; nay even to the uſefulneſs of ordination itſelf; ſince the effect of the bleſſing depends much upon the moral fitneſs of the perſon ordain'd; it

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1*ſt*, Becomes every candidate for the ſacred office to reſolve ſeriouſly, that he will take heed to himſelf, not only for his *own* ſake, but for the ſake of that people over which the *Holy Ghoſt makes him overſeer:* and ſo to prepare himſelf in moral ſanctity, that he may appear qualified in the ſight of God to receive a bleſſing. His life, to the generality of men, will be the beſt proof of his *miſſion*. This is *viſible* ſanctity; which is much better calculated to gain attention, than mere abſtract reaſoning about the ſacredneſs of his vocation. A *life* may convince, where *diſcourſe* cannot.

2*dly*, It becomes all chriſtians, according to our Saviour's direction, to *pray that God will ſend forth labourers into his harveſt:* that He will incline able and deſerving men to take upon them the ſacred taſk of miniſtring in his church: having bleſſed them with the opportunities of a proper education. The *field of harveſt is ſtill great, and the labourers are few*, in compariſon of the great numbers who remain yet to be converted to the *profeſſion* of the true religion, or to *ſincerity* in it. But ſince it is poſſible that ſome may be lawfully *ſent*, and yet afterwards neglect the duties of their miſſion, It remains

Laſtly,

Laſtly, for us to pray to the great diſpoſer of hearts, that He will ſend forth *diligent* and *induſtrious labourers into his harveſt*. The chriſtian world is repreſented under the ſimilitude of a field, in which not only wheat, but alſo tares grow up. Theſe will always afford ſufficient employment to the man of God, and as it will be his care and ſtudy, ſo will it be his glory, by a peculiar kind of cultivation herein, to ſurpaſs the art of the common huſbandman, and convert theſe tares into good grain.

As long as there ſhall be found men upon earth, fond of new opinions, prone to vice, or indolent enough to acquieſce in error, a ſufficient taſk will always remain before him. It ſhould therefore be the ſubject of his moſt earneſt application, (if he would prove the reality of his *call*, by his *intention* of doing good) to convince the *erroneous* by reaſon, and ſound argument; to feed the *ignorant* with wholeſome doctrine; to reclaim the *vicious* by all the methods of admonition, and perſuaſion; both by the mercies, and terrors of the Lord; but above all by the winning influence of example: to walk before his flock in the right path. Foraſmuch as the men of this world will hardly be perſuaded, that their guide is aſſured of his way, till they ſee him

him walking on invariably in it. The conduct of the guide will always be more viſible, as it will always be more induſtriouſly enquired after, than that of other men. The man of God is the *city ſet upon a hill*, a direction to the traveller: may he therefore be not only as conſpicuous, but as ſtedfaſt, as ſuch a director. May the *lips of the prieſt retain knowledge*, and his *life* inſtruction! May he be *ready to give an anſwer to every one, that aſketh him a queſtion*, and may his *hopes* ſhine forth in his converſation! In ſhort: as the *Lord of the harveſt* hath ſent him forth into his field, that great field the world, may he faithfully, and induſtriouſly labour in it, endeavouring to correct the *bad* ſoil, to cheriſh aud improve the *good*, and ſo to *go on his way*, *bearing forth good ſeed*, that when his Lord ſhall ſummon him back to give an account of his labours, *he may come again with joy, and bring his ſheaves with him!*

DISCOURSE II.

The intended Effects and religious Improvement of extraordinary divine Judgments, and of religious Faſts, inſtituted in Remembrance of them. —Preached before the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen in St. Paul's Cathedral, on *Friday, September* 2, 1748, being the Anniverſary of the Fire of *London*.

ISAIAH XXVI. 9.

When thy Judgments are in the Earth, the Inhabitants of the World will learn Righteouſneſs.

THE ſupreme and all-wiſe governor of the univerſe makes uſe of different ſanctions, for the ſupport of his authority, over rational creatures. Sanctions, at the

ſame time beſt adapted, no doubt, to the nature of moral agents, and the promotion of moral happineſs. The felicities of heaven, and the miſeries of a dreadful eternity, are ſanctions acting at a diſtance. When theſe fail of ſucceſs, then *preſent*, and more *alarming* motives are applied. Fires, and earthquakes, wars, peſtilence, and famine are immediate executioners of divine vengeance, or inſtruments of divine admonition; and their voice, as they are ſuch, commands immediate attention.

But even among theſe latter ſources of fear and horror, ſome are more extenſive in their effects than others. For the greater and more diffuſive the calamity is, the ſtronger uſually, and more conſpicuous is the demonſtration of divine power. Where a ſingle individual, or a private family is the object of infliction, the influence is confined within the narrow ſphere of their neighbourhood or acquaintance: but when the judgment ſpreads itſelf through a wider circumference, the whole community trembles: *And when the* city *periſheth, the wiſe man layeth it to heart.*[a]

The whole body perhaps is thrown into convulſions, from the ſuddenly afflicted ſtate of ſo great a number of its members. But the misfortune is, that very few, the truly

[a] Iſai. LVII. 1.

wiſe

wiſe alone, by ſerious reflection upon the cauſe, and propoſed end of theſe judgments, make a religious improvement of them. The generality of men are at firſt alarmed; they lament the accident; and then forget it. Perhaps they endeavour to account for it in a *natural* way; and ſo having ſatisfied their curioſity, acquieſce in their diſcovery of the neareſt efficient cauſe, without carrying their thoughts any further; without lifting up their minds to the power of him, who preſides inviſibly over all the courſes of nature: of him, who ſendeth war, and who ſendeth famine; *who ſaith to the ſword, ſword, go through that land and devour it; or who ſtretcheth forth his hand, and breaketh off the ſtaff of the bread thereof; or who commandeth a peſtilence, and poureth out his fury upon the land in blood.*[b] For it is the Lord who ſpeaketh, whether it be by war, or by peſtilence, by famine, or by fire.

Now if by any of theſe his ſorer judgments more lively impreſſions are made upon the mind, yet perhaps they endure but for a time: for when *temptation ariſeth* from more pleaſing and captivating objects, *they preſently fade away.* It will not therefore I hope, be

[b] Ezek. xiv. 13. 17. 19.

thought unſeaſonable to the occaſion of this day's ſolemnity, from the natural effect of extraordinary divine judgments upon the mind, to conſider what ſhould be their improved influence; and what is the beſt means of promoting this improvement.

The firſt effect then of theſe judgments, which ariſes in the courſe of nature, is a ſudden alarm upon the ſpirits. Fear is a natural paſſion implanted in us for very uſeful purpoſes. And to extinguiſh it entirely, would perhaps be as uſeleſs a victory, as the attempt might be vain. To extirpate nature utterly is impoſſible, how far ſoever ſome men may have proceeded in a monſtrous progreſs of vice towards it. Now fear is one of the ſtrongeſt paſſions adherent to our nature: how much ſoever then the fire may be ſmother'd for a time, the flame *will* ſometimes break through its covering: the more the ſpring is bent, with the greater elaſticity will it return, when it gets the better of the preſſure laid upon it. This Remark is juſtified by the violent emotions of ſome deſperate infidels, that have long endeavour'd to ſubdue their fears, by dedicating their days to ridicule, but have loſt all their impious reſolution, when the terrors of death have ſet themſelves in array againſt them. *Haſt thou found me,*

me, O mine enemy! [c] was the exclamation of wicked *Ahab* to the prophet that was ſent to denounce judgment againſt him. And though men may pretend in the hours of irreligious mockery, and blaſphemous profaneneſs, to have baniſhed every religious paſſion, yet *when their deſtruction threatens them as a whirlwind; then their fear cometh as deſolation; diſtreſs and anguiſh then taketh hold of them.* [d]

Thus we ſee the paſſion univerſally prevailing; the uſe of it is to alarm us againſt the impending evil; that by foreſeeing, and being render'd uneaſy under the apprehenſions of danger, we may take all proper precautions to prevent or avoid the ſtroke. All our paſſions were implanted in us for ſome good end. Fear is a natural paſſion; the proper application of it will be our virtue: and what can the proper application be, but to be warned by example, or terrified by evils threaten'd to ourſelves? *Think ye that theſe Galilæans, were ſinners above all the Galilæans,* ſaith the great inſtructor of men, *becauſe they ſuffered ſuch things? I tell you nay; but except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.* [e]

[c] 1 Kings xxi. 20. [d] Prov. 1. 27. [e] Luke xiii. 2, 3.

Another effect of theſe judgments leading to the ſame end is, that they are uſually look'd upon with horror. This is that affection or ſudden ſhock of mind which we feel at the ſight of any dreadful, deformed preſent object; or the more remote proſpect of any diſtant one; whether removed by interval of time or place; whether obvious to the ſenſes, or preſented only by the imagination. The difference between this paſſion and that of fear is, that the latter ariſes from the apprehenſion of evil threaten'd to ourſelves, or to ſomething that is dear and valuable to us: the former may ariſe where neither we ourſelves, nor any thing which we greatly eſteem is concerned. Thus the burning of *Troy* may affect us with horror, though it cannot with fear.

This affection is uſually attended with another, which we call commiſeration or pity. A paſſion, which however it may be aſcribed by ſome miſtaken judges of human nature merely to a principle of ſelfiſhneſs, and ſelfiſh fear, or by others to the imbecillity of human nature, and ſo is ſtiled an infirmity, yet no doubt was ingrafted in us by the original author of our being, for a merciful and generous purpoſe, urging us to the relief of our ſuffering fellow-creatures, where they are capable

of

of receiving relief from our liberality. For though we cannot relieve an inhabitant of ancient Troy, for whom our heart has often bled, yet the poetical picture of Troy in flames may ſoften our nature towards a diſtreſs'd Briton.

The laſt, and moſt univerſally prevailing effect, which I ſhall mention, of theſe judgments, eſpecially in theſe days of enquiry after ſcience, is a curioſity of enquiring into the cauſes of the calamity. And theſe may be either immediate or remote; either inſtrumental or primary. The general fault of men, as I obſerved, is that they uſually acquieſce in having diſcover'd the neareſt efficient cauſe, without carrying their thoughts any higher up to the firſt univerſal mover.

For though it might be impious, as it is uncharitable, to conſtrue every calamitous accident into an immediate divine judgment: *Though there may be a fire and the Lord not be in the fire; or a ſtrong wind may paſs, and the Lord not be in the wind*; yet we are aſſured that he does not always ſpeak to ſinful man in the *ſmall ſtill voice alone.*[f] *Though there may be evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it; yet when the trumpet hath*

[f] 1 Kings xix. 11, 12.

blown, ſaith the prophet, *ſhall not the people be afraid? when the lion hath roared, who will not fear? when the Lord hath ſpoken*, by an extraordinary demonſtration of power, *who will not propheſie?*[s]

It was the fault indeed of ſome puritanical men in a late age of enthuſiaſm to attribute too much to divine judgments: to cry out *the cauſe of the Lord*, againſt every ſignal ſufferer: to call in the Deity where no apparent reaſon could be aſſign'd worthy of his immediate interpoſition: the fault of the preſent age is almoſt totally to exclude the Deity from his government of the moral world; as if he had reſerved no power of interpoſition to himſelf: to attribute every event to the courſe of nature. But then let us remember amidſt the revolutions of ſecondary agents, who is their primary; let us remember, who is the author of nature. For whatever we may attribute to chance or fortune; to the negligence or malice of our fellow-creatures amidſt the accidents that befall us; yet in the original connexion between the cauſe and the effect, every event is agreeable to the primary diſpenſation of a ſuperior agent. It was God which ſo firſt ordered things in the diſpoſition of nature, that after the fall of man, progreſſive wickedneſs ſhould meet with theſe

[s] Amos III. 6, 8.

alarms,

alarms. When he firſt conſtituted things, and weighed their powers in the balance, he might have forbid the waters ever to tranſgreſs their bounds, or the fire to devour beyond its uſeful limits. But he who for certain ends implanted in us paſſions of fear, conſternation, horror, and compaſſion, aſſign'd objects alſo correſpondent to them, upon fit occaſions to excite thoſe paſſions.

The natural effect then of theſe alarms, and their conſequent affections, if properly attended to, will be ſerious reflection upon the cauſes that gave occaſion to the alarm; to awaken reaſon, and call her to her proper ſtation: the event of ſerious reflection under the guardianſhip of reaſon, will be ſerious reſolution upon a future rational, and virtuous conduct; a reſolution, either tranſitory, or permanent. When the intellectual faculties then are thus alarm'd by fears, or ſufferings, or by the horrors in view of a ſtorm we have eſcaped, it will be our buſineſs to promote the work of nature: to confine our attention: to guard againſt the calm of life, as though we ſtill ſailed in danger of a ſhipwreck.

Our next enquiry therefore will be how to make theſe paſſions and their effects durable, ſo that we may reap their intended fruit.

Now

Now for this end various means have been deviſed by the beſt obſervers of human nature, and her methods of operation. Among all of them, none has been more univerſally received or approved of than public days of abſtinence, reflection, and humiliation. Even the heathens by the light of nature, had their days of proceſſion and ſupplication to their Gods, of intermiſſion of buſineſs, and the common employments of life, under any preſent, or impending calamity. Solemn games, or plays were celebrated, according to the Roman orator, which were religious inſtitutions among them,[h] *Nor was any thing omitted, which was thought expedient to appeaſe the Gods.* After any ſurprizing prodigy, ſolemn days, and rites of deprecation were injoin'd by law: and why may not ſtated days of ſerious meditation upon paſt judgments, upon evils already executed, be applied by Chriſtians to very uſeful purpoſes?

The mind of man is very apt to forget the calamities it hath ſuffered; very ſeldom recollects the judgments in which it hath had no ſhare. We may venture to ſay that many among us would ſcarce ever have heard of the judiciary calamity of this day, had it not been

[h] Neque res ulla, quæ ad placandum Deos pertineret, prætermiſſa eſt. Tull. in L. Catil. Orat. 3.

for

for this day's ſolemnity of Humiliation. Highly reaſonable is it therefore, that certain ſeaſons of religious recollection ſhould be appointed, wherein men may call to mind the cauſes of thoſe judgments which their foreſathers have felt: a great happineſs ſhould they think it to be thus admoniſhed, by ſerious recollection, and a conſequent reformation, to prevent the neceſſity of any ſuch inflictions upon themſelves. This is, as it were, to perpetuate the uſe of the divine judgments of the Lord upon the earth; to keep alive in our minds the ſeverer diſpenſations of his providence, whilſt we live ourſelves under a benigner aſpect; to continue down all the moral effects of thoſe miſeries, which the ſins of our anceſtors produced, without feeling their ſeverities; to learn righteouſneſs, at the expence of another's ſufferings.

It has been the artful endeavour of our modern profane infidels to laugh every religious inſtitution out of the world, that they might thereby baniſh every religious ſentiment. It could not reaſonably be expected therefore, that ſuch ſacred ſolemnities of faſting as the preſent, being allowed promoters or preſervatives of piety, ſhould by any means eſcape their cenſure.

It hath been amply objected by an [i] author of more wit and raillery, than ſolid argumentation and judgment; *that nothing can be more abſurd, than to make abſtinence from food or pleaſures meritorious, any further than it conduces to health, or qualifies us for buſineſs: that it is profane to ſuppoſe that the good God takes pleaſure in vexing, and tormenting his creatures; and therefore that it is ridiculous to ſuppoſe, that any part of religion conſiſts in days of faſting.*

We diſown indeed, that we have any claim of *merit*, at the hands of God, from our very beſt actions. It is no more than our duty, that we exert the faculties which he hath given us, to the purpoſes for which he deſigned them: that we apply them in the beſt manner we are able, to the promotion of his glory, and our own happineſs. But then as it is our duty to employ them thus, ſo is it conſequently incumbent upon us, to make uſe of all thoſe means which may aſſiſt us in this application. Becauſe he that is obliged to purſue the end, is by the ſame obligation bound to embrace all the means conducive to that end. Now our author allows in his very objection, that abſtinence may, in ſome

[i] Independent Whig, No. 27.

caſes,

caſes, be expedient *to qualify us for buſineſs*; becauſe he maintains it to be no further *allowable*, than as it is ſubſervient to this view. But if it may at any time be uſeful to qualify us for buſineſs in general, why not for that important buſineſs which is the great end of life, the Glory of our Maker? And if it may ſometimes be conducive to health, by which I ſuppoſe he would mean the health of the *body*; as there is ſo cloſe a connexion between the *mind* and the *body*, that they have a conſtant mutual influence upon each other, why may it not by promoting the health, the good conſtitution, and regular organization of the animal powers, be thereby ſerviceable to thoſe of an intellectual nature, and promote the due vigour and activity of the ſoul? Abſtinence indeed has by all ſtudious perſons, who have been beſt acquainted with the operations of the ſoul, the determinations of the will, and the progreſs of the underſtanding, and with all the preparatives requiſite for a due exerciſe of its powers, been allowed the beſt aſſiſtant in its reſearches, the moſt faithful guardian of its freedom.

But further, as the greateſt misfortunes of our nature ariſe from an unhappy conteſt between our animal and rational faculties, and from the ſuperiority which the former bear

over

over the latter, it may be prudent at leaſt, if not neceſſary, at certain intervals of time, to curb the luxuriances of paſſion, in order to reſtore reaſon to her proper ſway: to teach thoſe irregular claimants of power, the *ſenſual deſires*, to obey the reins of wiſdom, by denying them their uſual indulgences: to reduce the enemy by cutting off his ſupplies, whom you cannot ſubdue in a pitch'd conteſt.

For a proof of theſe things, we need only appeal to our very witty author himſelf, who has the art of blending always a ſubtle mixture of truth with his ſpecious falſhood, that the former may the better introduce and recommend the latter; where he aſſerts, agreeably to the demand of our preſent ſolemnity, the following weighty truths: [j] religion, ſaith he, and philoſophy too, *teaches us to ſubmit to afflictions and calamities with patience and humility, and to conſider them either as effects of our own intemperance, and folly; as the neceſſary and inevitable concomitants of human nature, or the ſtrokes of providence intended for our correction and amendment: nor do I deny but it may be ſometimes lawful, and expedient too, mechanically to prepare our minds with diſpoſitions ſuitable to the actions they are*

j Independent Whig, No. 38.

to

to produce. *Mechanical* preparations then upon ſome occaſions are allowed by him to be not only lawful but expedient too: and if there may be even a *mechanical* power in faſting, why is it to be ridiculed and exploded? Or what preparatives is it moſt reaſonable for us to ſubmit to, unleſs ſuch as the Deity hath pointed out to us by expreſs revelation; and ſuch as by univerſal experience are found to be moſt effectual?

Our author ſuppoſes in one place, that occaſional abſtinence may be *conducive to health*; yet in other places he calls it *ſtarving, a practice tending to deſtroy our beings, or make them miſerable.* But how does he make this conceſſion, and this cenſure conſiſtent with each other? Or, to anſwer our author in his own language, how does that *which contributes to health*, tend to make men ghoſts before their time? Let him take heed, leſt within the ſpace of a few ſentences, he ſhould unwarily interfere with his own objections. But it is no wonder that he is ſo dexterous in oppoſing all the reſt of mankind who is ſo ſubtle and ingenious in contradicting himſelf. Unleſs he ſhall ſay, that whatever abſtinence is dedicated to religious purpoſes muſt be prejudicial, though at the ſame time if it had been uſed

uſed upon prudential phyſical views, it might have been conducive to health.

The truth is; proper abſtinence may be a wholeſome diſcipline to the ſoul, as well as to the body; and for this very reaſon ſerviceable to the former, becauſe it contributes to the health of the latter. Shall we then quarrel with a ſalutary medicine becauſe we diſlike the time of its application, or the phyſician who preſcribed it? though we own at the ſame time, that if it had not been preſcribed, or this very time fixt for its adminiſtration, it might have been expedient and commendable, if applied at our own direction.

The uſe of public inſtitutions is, that by fixing the duty to a certain ſeaſon, they ſecure its diſcharge, which, if left vague and open to the direction of each individual, would perhaps by the generality of men, how uſeful ſoever to the ſoul or body, be totally neglected. We are commanded according to our author's [k] own conceſſion, by the law of our religion to *faſt* as well as *pray*. Though faſting therefore were not a duty by the law of nature, it might become ſo by divine appointment. The precept we ſee is

[k] Independent Whig, No. 34.

general,

general, and is to be perform'd *ſometimes*; the limitation of time and occaſion is left to the particular exigences of men, and the determination of thoſe in authority; as is the execution and application of moſt general laws. None is required inconſiſtent with health: allowance is to be made in caſes of particular conſtitutions: *all* may abſtain in ſome degree, for a few hours indulged to meditation, with regard to the *quantity* of their food; and for a longer time with regard to the *quality*. But why may not public authority ſometimes confine that duty to ſtated days of performance, which all men, we ſee, are commanded to do *ſometimes*; and which our author allows, nay rather thinks expedient for them at certain times *voluntarily* to practiſe, on account of its *natural* ſervices? The great author of our religion gave rules to his diſciples, for the obſervance of inſtituted faſts. *When ye faſt*, ſaith he, *be ye not as the Hypocrites*.[1] Their compliance then with the days of faſting inſtituted among Jews, was here ſuppoſed. The due manner only of performing it is preſcribed. It was not to conſiſt merely in outward dejectedneſs of habit, but in ſincerity of heart.

Religion, we acknowledge, does not conſiſt in the mere external obſervance of ſuch

[1] Matt. vi. 16.

rites. Faſting, we confeſs, is not piety; neither is ſackcloth and aſhes righteouſneſs. But faſting may be promotive at leaſt, if not productive, of piety: the humility of the garment may have a tendency to produce humbleneſs of mind: this mental humility, ſeated in a ſenſe of our own infirmities, may terminate in a true repentance. Foraſmuch as by preſenting emblems of contrition to our view, it may recall to our minds the occaſions of our humiliation. For the mind by mediation of the ſenſes, cannot but be affected with the objects that are before it. To rend the garment may with ſome proud and lofty ſpirits, be the moſt effectual way to rend the heart.

This may be the beſt mechanical preparation of ſuch diſpoſitions, as ſhall be prevalent at the throne of grace. When the unhappy prodigal was reduced, by the neceſſity of faſting, or the humble food of huſks, to a ſenſe of his former profuſeneſs, and a conſequent return to duty, it was then that the forgiving father ordered his ſervants to bring forth the beſt robe, and put it on him. It was by the ſevere diſcipline of hunger and nakedneſs, that he was render'd worthy to be cloathed with the garments of Joy.

An alteration only in the quality of our food, without any abatement in the quantity may have its influence, by reminding us of the mournful reaſon which produced that Change. When *thou ſhalt eat thy fleſh with unleavened bread*, and when *with bitter herbs thou ſhalt eat it*, then *thou wilt remember the death of the firſt-born among thy neighbours, amongſt whom thou ſojourned, when the Lord paſſed over thee!* [m]

Wherefore, to draw towards a concluſion, and the lamentable occaſion of this day's ſolemnity: we may think perhaps, that we are by no means conſequential ſufferers by the judgments inflicted upon our ancient city: that we are many of us not deſcended from thoſe its former inhabitants: that our anceſtors may have viewed theſe miſeries at a diſtance, and had no greater ſhare in the calamity, than we ourſelves: that we are therefore probably no loſers by the penalty: but it is our own fault, if we are not gainers by the example. Though perhaps we are little aſſured how far the ſufferings of many in thoſe days may have affected the reſpective fortunes of ſome of us their unknown deſcendants.

[m] Exod. xii. 9, 12, 13.

Our city, like the fabulous phœnix of the ancients, may have ariſen more youthful, and ſplendid, out of the aſhes of the old: but then the more magnificent, and ſpacious, her preſent ſtructures are, the more conſpicuous proof are they of the extent and ſeverity of that judgment, which gave occaſion to ſo great a renovation. It hath been ſaid by ſome, that the fire was inſtrumental in putting a ſtop to a lurking peſtilence, that then lay within the bowels of the city; but conſider, if this was the caſe, how dreadful was the conſequence of that corruption, which could be purged "ſo only as by fire." It is our grand intereſt, and duty therefore, to take prudent, and religious warning, from theſe calamities, to forſake thoſe ſins, which have deſtroy'd our ancient city; leſt he ſend his judgments again upon *this*, the glory of our land; the great ſtorehouſe of its riches; even the beauty of all its ſtrength: *a fire upon our Judah, to deſtroy the palaces of Jeruſalem.*[n]

For we find this calamity as the ſoreſt of evils threaten'd, by the prophet Amos, to many nations ripe for deſtruction: *a fire upon their walls, and upon their houſes, which*

[n] Amos II. 5.

ſhould

ſhould deſtroy the palaces thereof. And we ſee the prophet Jeremiah aſſigning a cauſe particularly inſtrumental in drawing down this vengeance: even the breach of the ſabbath day: *but if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the ſabbath day, and not to bear a burthen, even entering in at the gates of Jeruſalem on the ſabbath day, then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it ſhall devour the palaces of Jeruſalem, and it ſhall not be quenched.*[o] Happy would it be for us and our city, if the like impieties within her walls did not give us too much reaſon to dread the like viſitation upon her palaces?

The admonitions of the Lord have of late been *frequent*, but are yet *gentle* among us. A ſound of war hath many days, I may now almoſt ſay many years, gone forth in our land; but through the mercy of our God, it hath ſeem'd, with reſpect to us, rather ſent to *terrify*, than to *puniſh*: for whilſt the fields of our neighbours have been fields of blood, our's have been the lands of ſecure plenty. A peſtilence walketh through our herds, but it hath not ſeized upon man. A fire hath lately devoured in your ſtreets, but it ſtopt within the limits of a ſmall deſtruc-

[o] Jeremiah XVII. 27,

tion: being ſent, as it were, rather to demonſtrate its power, than to exert the whole extent of its fury.—That fury, which at the ſame time it hath been permitted to exerciſe with an unbridled rage upon other cities. Whereas a ſmall part only of our metropolis was laid in aſhes to be a proof of divine juſtice: the far greater part remains a ſtanding memorial of divine goodneſs. For if we acknowledge that the juſtice of the Lord was in the fire, let us acknowledge that his mercy alſo was in the deliverance.

Whilſt the name of fire is grown almoſt familiar to your journals from the calamities of other nations; you have the ſatisfaction of ſeeing this day, amidſt the ruin of foreign cities, your lives, your properties, the dearer and tenderer parts of yourſelves, your wives and little ones, this auguſt and flouriſhing city, even within the memory of the youngeſt among you, preſerved by the providence of God from the rage of a devouring flame, ſnatch'd out of the jaws of impending ruin. The fire might have extended its victory further, and have burned as in ancient days: but he who *ſaith to the winds, be ſtill*, ſaid alſo to the fire, *hitherto ſhalt thou come, and no further; and here ſhall thy proud rage be ſtayed.* His providence having ſet over this city

city a moſt faithful, vigilant, and active preſiding magiſtrate, to repreſs the rage of the inflammation, and the tumults of the people no leſs dangerous, and oftentimes no leſs pernicious than the fury of the flame itſelf.

You have ſeen in theſe your days, a fire in your city, breaking forth, if I may ſo ſpeak, in the very center of all its riches: you have ſeen it threaten your churches, the houſe of your exchange, your gates, your dwellings: you have ſeen its fury, and at the ſame time, through the mercy of our God, its moderation: you have ſeen the fire propitiouſly extinguiſhed, and have the ſatisfaction to behold far the greateſt part of this city ſtanding yet unhurt by its flames. If then, as the Roman orator ſpeaks upon a like occaſion, *the days of our preſervation are more joyous than thoſe of our birth; foraſmuch as we are born without reflexion, but are preſerved with pleaſure*;[p] how great ſhould be our tribute of praiſe to the ſupreme diſpoſer of ſafety and ruin! How ſincere our thankfulneſs to thoſe whom he hath been pleaſed to dignify with the high office of being inſtrumental in ſaving your lives, or ſecuring

[p] Et, ſi non minus jucundi atque illuſtres ſunt ii dies, quibus conſervamur, quam illi, quibus naſcimur; quod Salutis certa Lætitia eſt, naſcendi incerta conditio, et quod ſine Senſu naſcimur, cum voluptate conſervamur. Tull. Orat. in L. Catil. III.

the materials, or conveniences of your ſubſiſtence! Remember that you have a [q] magiſtrate who beareth not the ſword in vain. Before whom it hath not been merely an enſign of dignity, but of defence likewiſe to your properties. Remember alſo, if the grateful remembrance can be any additional recommendation or endearment to you of the place of divine worſhip, that inverting the order of God's proceedings againſt the Jews, there hath been a time, when judgment *among you*, hath *ſtopt* at the houſe of God.[r]

And let this day, as it returns in your annals, be embraced as an opportunity of recollecting what you felt within yourſelves, as often as the flame preſented itſelf to your view: from your own ſenſations conclude what were thoſe of your anceſtors, when they ſaw a much more extended ruin: when the flame had full commiſſion given it over the city to deſtroy her habitations. What were the ſenſations that accompanied that extenſive triumph of fire! What miſgivings

[q] Sir Robert Ladbroke, then Lord Mayor, ordered the gates of the exchange to be opened, for the ſecure reception of the goods of the citizens: and ſtood there in perſon to prevent any confuſion or diſturbance, attended for ſome time by his proper officers. His prudent behaviour upon that occaſion gained him great eſteem among the citizens, and perſonal thanks the next day from the crown.

[r] The laſt fire ſtopt at St. Michael's church, Cornhill.

of

of heart! What faintings of ſpirit! What aſtoniſhment of mind! What changing of the countenance! What trembling of the joints! What ſmiting of the knees together! With how many diſtracting cares were their hearts then at once ſmitten! With what ſolicitude for their friends! With what anguiſh for their children! With what terrors for themſelves, and their own future ſubſiſtence! For the diſtreſſes of families there *were great piercings of heart.*

Let thoſe who had only a diſtant proſpect of the danger, being themſelves ſecure from miſchief, recollect with what feelings of compaſſion they were ſmitten for the calamities of others! With what horrors at the very imagination of the deſtruction that might have fallen upon themſelves! With what joy that they had ſo happily eſcaped the ruin.

But conſider; if a city thus in flames be ſo frightful a ſpectacle, how dreadful muſt be that of a world on fire! How terrible ſhall be the ſight to an awaking ſinner, when he ſhall be called up into a world of horrors: when there ſhall be no room to eſcape amidſt an univerſal conflagration; no paſſage but from flame to flame! *In that day when the heavens ſhall paſs away with a great noiſe; and the elements ſhall melt with fervent heat;*

the

the earth alſo, and the works that are therein ſhall be burnt up! Seeing then that all theſe things ſhall be diſſolved,[a] let us learn to ſet accordingly their proper value on them, not to purſue them with greater ardor than they deſerve. For in common prudence, *what manner of perſons ought we to be in all holy converſation, and godlineſs, looking* ſeriouſly forwards, towards *that day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire, ſhall be diſſolved, and the elements ſhall melt with fervent heat.* Being aſſured of this one neceſſary truth, that the moſt diſtant point of time, how far ſoever it may be removed, yet becauſe it *is future*, will one day become a preſent period.

Happy will it be for us: it will be our wiſdom, becauſe it is our life, if by any preſent gentler corrections or admonitions of the Lord, if by any accidental terrors of temporal fire, we are moved properly to dread that fire, which is much more to be dreaded; more exquiſite in torture, and more terrible in duration, even the fire which ſhall continually prey upon the impenitent ſinner, *in the lake that burneth with fire and brimſtone, which is the ſecond death!*

You have ſeen what are the paſſions implanted in us by the wiſe author of nature,

[a] 2 Peter iii. 10, 11, 12.

what

what their effects, their intention, and their improvement. Let fear, and horror then have their perfect work: and even though you can forget yourſelves, yet let your commiſeration begin at home. Haſten to the relief of your innocent deſcendants; and by a ſeaſonable reformation prevent thoſe evils which might otherwiſe from the iniquities of their fathers be derived upon them to the third and fourth generation. Let all your curious reſearches into the cauſes of public calamities, lead you up to the firſt univerſal cauſe: to him who hath ordained the courſes of nature, the reſpective powers of natural agents, and all the various connexions of events.

In ſhort, whilſt we continue to have intereſts upon earth; it will be for the private emolument, as well as it is the duty of us all, who bear any relation to theſe walls, or whoſe habitations are fixt within them, eſpecially upon the return of this annual ſolemnity, with united voice to pray to the great protector of cities, and nations, that *this* city, which hath been raiſed by his providence, to be one of the moſt beautiful, and moſt flouriſhing upon earth, may be preſerved by his ſanctifying grace, from periſhing in the wickedneſs of its own inhabitants.

And,

And, may it grow in goodneſs, as it grows in riches, till it becomes at length in the brightneſs of its virtues, as well as the magnificence of its ſtructures, in an eminent ſenſe, *the city ſet upon an hill, which cannot be hid!*[t]

[t] Matt. v. 14.

DISCOURSE III.

The Expediency of ſome divine Interpoſition during the firſt Ages of the Chriſtian Church conſidered.—— Preached before the Univerſity of *Oxford*, on *Sunday, July* 2, 1749.

MARK XVI. 17, 18.

And theſe Signs ſhall follow them that believe; in my Name ſhall they caſt out Devils, they ſhall ſpeak with New Tongues;

They ſhall take up Serpents, and if they drink any deadly Thing, it ſhall not hurt them; they ſhall lay Hands on the Sick, and they ſhall recover.

A Promiſe is here made, and a deſcription given of the perſons qualified to receive it: namely, *thoſe that believe.* It is not

not confined to the eleven apoſtles preſent at the delivery: for the expreſſion then would have been, *you* that believe, without a change of the perſon made uſe of in the former verſe; and not ſo extenſive, *them* that believe. *And He ſaid unto them*, i. e. unto the eleven, to whom He appeared as they ſat at meat, *go ye into all the world, and preach the goſpel to every creature.* He *that believeth, and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved; but he that believeth not ſhall be damned. And theſe ſigns ſhall follow* them *that believe; in my name ſhall they caſt out devils,*[a] *&c.*—— We ſee here a change of the perſons from the limited word *you*, to the indefinite *them*, within the compaſs of three verſes. A commiſſion to preach the goſpel, and to baptize, is given to the eleven apoſtles; a miraculous power is promiſed to *them* that believe.

This promiſe was made immediately before our Saviour's aſcenſion into heaven. The diſciples were to wait for the completion of it, at Jeruſalem, before they ſet forward upon the mighty work of propagating the goſpel throughout the world. *But tarry ye here in the city of Jeruſalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.*[b] This power was

[a] Mark xvi. 15—18. [b] Luke xxiv. 49.

fully

fully communicated to all at once, aſſembled at one place, on the day of pentecoſt, and ſenſible evidence given to them of the communication. As we read Acts II. 1, and following verſes. *And when the day of pentecoſt was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And ſuddenly there came a ſound from heaven, as of a ruſhing mighty wind, and it filled all the place where they were ſitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and ſat upon each of them.* This emblematical appearance was, no doubt, intended to intimate to them, by ſenſible tokens, that they were endued from on high with the gift of tongues. It follows, *and they were all filled with the Holy Ghoſt, and began to ſpeak with tongues, as the ſpirit gave them utterance.*[c]

From the manner of the communication one might conclude, that this power was deſign'd to be *permanent* in the apoſtles; contrary to the opinion of a late writer, who would have it only *occaſional*; beſtow'd on each individual, at the time it was to be exerted; *pro re natâ*, as the Latins ſpeak, as particular occaſions ſhould require. Elſe, if it were not a *permanent* endowment, why

[c] Acts II. 4.

was

was it beſtowed in this formal way, on *all* at once; aſſembled in one place: and not rather given to each individual, at diſtinct times, and in diſtinct places, as particular exigencies ſhould demand? But as the promiſe ſeem'd to imply ſome extraordinary durable gift to be beſtow'd on *all* at once in Jeruſalem, for which they were to wait there, ſo it ſeems to have been accordingly fulfilled.

Immediately after this ſupernatural endowment, this proof of their high commiſſion, they ſet forth upon the weighty taſk of publiſhing the goſpel to mankind: and exerciſed that power which the Holy Ghoſt had given them, for a teſtimony of the truth, in the production of many wonderful effects. "They caſt out devils in the name of Jeſus; "they ſpake with new tongues; they were "uninjured by the aſſault of ſerpents; they "laid hands on the ſick, and they recover'd."

This was the power communicated to the firſt preachers of the goſpel, to alarm the attention of mankind, and bear evidence to the truth. The continuance of this power in the chriſtian church, during the firſt ages, is a ſubject worthy of our examination, and more eſpecially ſeaſonable at this time, when a cer-

a certain writer hath made it a matter of diſpute.

Chriſtians at preſent believe, upon the credit of the moſt pious, and the beſt reputed writers of eccleſiaſtical antiquity, who are dignified with the name of *fathers* of the church, from their paternal care of it in its origin, that theſe powers were for good reaſons continued through the firſt centuries. Our author endeavours to invalidate their credit, from his character of the perſons, and the incredibility of the facts: little attending to the expediency of *ſome* divine interpoſitions in thoſe ages: but very fearful, leſt by allowing them, he ſhould injure proteſtantiſm, in giving too much ground of credit to all the pretended miracles of the church of Rome. In one place indeed he is mighty indifferent about conſequences, where he is anſwering the objection, that his plan may affect the credibility even of the apoſtolical powers, and ſo injure the evidence of chriſtianity in general. But his fears return upon him, when the church of Rome may poſſibly gain any thing: ſo that he is more afraid it ſeems of the intereſts of popery, than concern'd about the cauſe of chriſtianity in general.

But let us call things to the impartial bar of reaſon. In diſcourſing therefore upon this ſubject, I ſhall

Firſt, enquire whether ſome divine interpoſitions might not be expedient, and therefore granted, during the firſt centuries of chriſtianity, to alarm its adverſaries, ſupport its teachers, and recommend its doctrines.

Secondly, ſhew that the ſuppoſal of ſuch interpretations during the infancy of the church, can give no countenance, or ground of ſupport to all the ſubſequent pretended miracles of the church of *Rome*. And this may help us forward with ſome obſervations,

Thirdly, and laſtly, towards aſſigning a probable time in general for the ceſſation of miracles, and towards anſwering ſome objections and queſtions which may have been propoſed.

Firſt then let us enquire whether ſome divine interpoſitions might not have been expedient, and therefore granted, during the firſt centuries of chriſtianity, to alarm its adverſaries, ſupport its teachers, and recommend its doctrines.

But

But ſays our author, this is to argue by hypotheſis; "to ſuppoſe the expediency, "and then infer from thence the certainty "of the facts." It would be ſo I allow, if we had nothing more to go upon, but a mere *ſuppoſition* of expediency. But if we fairly enquire whether they were expedient, that is, whether the ſame end continued to require them, which had given occaſion to them at firſt; and then proceed from the wiſdom, power, and goodneſs of God, which *had* once viſibly intereſted themſelves in the promotion of chriſtianity, to enquire, whether it is not reaſonable to conclude, that miraculous powers might be continued; ſuch an enquiry is not *hypotheſis:* nor is ſuch inference founded on mere ſuppoſition. The principle will, in great meaſure at leaſt, juſtify the concluſion: and *that* in proportion as the end propoſed appears more viſibly to require the means. For in every queſtion about the diſputed act of any rational agent, the end propoſed, or the "cui bono," as the Latins call it, is always enquired into. He may learn *that* from his friend *Tully*, or from *Tully*'s friend *Ariſtotle*; and if there was an end aſſign'd, and the act was proved conducive to that end, this was allowed to clear the way to the credibility of the fact,

and prove that the act was wrought by that agent. So if the interpoſition of the Deity is to be called in; a queſtion naturally ariſes, how far the end propoſed is worthy the ſupport of the Deity, and how far the act in queſtion is promotive of that end, and expedient to it.

But does not our author proceed much more upon hypotheſis, when he firſt ſuppoſes, without any proof, that the miracles were *inexpedient* to any good end, and then argues from thence, and from the ridiculous light in which he places them, that they are utterly incredible? Who aſſigns to them ſome private end which they were not intended to promote, and then argues from thence, that they were never wrought at all: who makes thoſe works to be effected in ſupport of the private opinions of particular men, which were wrought in defence of the general doctrines of chriſtianity: and then from the ſuppoſed erroneouſneſs, or trifling nature of the doctrines, or a real exceſs of opinion in ſome few caſes, poſitively infers the incredibility of the miracles, and the impoſſibility, that providence ſhould make men of human infirmities, inſtruments of his power. Is *this* a fair enquiry? Is not this rather to beg his principles, and then found his demonſtration upon

upon them? In this way of arguing he might produce another fair enquiry in mathematics, wherein he might plainly demonſtrate againſt the demonſtrations of *Euclid*, becauſe *Euclid* was a man of human infirmity, and conſequently fallible: or in philoſophy prove that *Tully* could never be a good reaſoner, becauſe he has introduced in one part of his works the muſic of the ſpheres, which was too loud to be heard,[d] and the abſolute perfection of the numbers ſeven and eight.[e]

Not that I will pretend to vindicate every miracle that he hath artfully collected, or endeavour'd to repreſent in a ridiculous light: nor yet would I exclude learned and good writers from a capacity of common judgment, or common honeſty, becauſe they have been men of fallibility, and human infirmity; becauſe one of them has mention'd with the appearance of ſuperſtition, the preciſe number of the *four* goſpels, or the *twelve* apoſtles, as if there were ſome ſecret virtue in them; as our author's own favourite writer has introduced ſome ſuperſtitious notions of a ſimilar kind. But our buſineſs is to examine the expediency of the miraculous powers aſcribed

[d] Hoc ſonitu oppletæ Aures hominum obſurduerunt. Som. Scip. C. v.

[e] Vid. Som. Scip. C. 11.

to the fathers in general. For ſurely there is a great deal of difference between a power in general granted for a viſible, good, univerſal end; and the abuſe of it, or falſe pretenſions to it afterwards, or miſtakes of private men concerning it in particular inſtances.

Having thus obviated the objection, let us proceed to the point in hand, namely the expediency of ſome divine interpoſitions during the infancy of chriſtianity, after the days of the apoſtles. And here let us conſider the ſubject,

1*ſt*, In the abſtract.

2*dly*, In its connexions with the circumſtances of the times.

And 1*ſt*, let us examine the queſtion a little in the abſtract, ſeparated from the different views, characters, and opinions of particular perſons; as relating only to a religion worthy of God, and infinitely beneficial to man.

Now, where the divine aid is called in, the end propoſed is always a principal point to be conſider'd; is to be join'd to the capacity and moral character of the witneſſes, as clearing the way to the credibility of the fact. For as God never acts in vain, ſo we may preſume,

preſume, that he will not ſuffer his deſigns for the general benefit of his creatures, and the ſupport of his own glory, to be fruſtrated at any time for want of proper action. The Deity is not confined to ſeaſons, days, or years. *Whoſe counſels are of old; and whoſe goings forth are from everlaſting.*[f] He is not obliged to circumſcribe his operations by the age of an apoſtle, by any certain number, or order of men. His counſels are limited to no certain æra, any further than He Himſelf ſhall think proper. All the portions of time are uniform and alike in reſpect to his power, and their periods are determined by his wiſdom. When an end therefore occurs worthy of his Interpoſition, He *may* interpoſe, and no man *letteth*; *for who ſhall ſay unto Him what doeſt thou?*[g] He who firſt ſettled the orders of Nature, may ſometimes interrupt thoſe Orders to ſhew that they were firſt conſtituted by Him, and therein confirm his authority over rational creatures by freſh inſtances of power. For to *conſtitute* or *interrupt* is equally an object of power to Him who firſt *created*, and whoſe might is infinite. *He who ſettled the round world ſo ſure, that it cannot be moved*;[h] who appointed to the

[f] Micah v. 2. [g] Job ix. 12. [h] Pſ. xciii. 2.

earth her orbit, and decreed that ſhe ſhould not wander from it, can yet ſtop her diurnal rotation round her axis, to favour the command of his ſervant *Joſhua*. He who weigh'd the creation in a balance, who eſtabliſhed the laws of univerſal gravity, and made an human body ſpecifically heavier than the waters, may yet to confirm the miſſion of his Son, command *Peter* to walk upon the ſea, and come unto Him.

That God almighty did in *one* age exert a ſupernatural power for the defence of chriſtianity, in ſigns and mighty wonders, cannot be diſputed, or doubted by any one, who calls himſelf a chriſtian; ſeems to be allowed even by our author himſelf. A queſtion here naturally ariſes, why we ſhould ſuppoſe the exertion of this power to be confined to that age only, and to be withdrawn immediately after the death of the apoſtles, if the great end to which it was directed, was not yet fully anſwer'd within the compaſs of that age; if we have facts of miracles well recorded upon faith of hiſtory after that age? Was there any thing in the eſſential faculties of the apoſtles themſelves that contributed to this power, and neceſſarily confined the exerciſe of it to their days? Or by their death was the arm of the Lord ſhortened? The

apoſtles

apoſtles were but Inſtruments in his hand; ſo might *others* alſo *be*, to promote or fully accompliſh the ſame beneficial end.

For if the miraculous power promiſed, and convey'd to the firſt believers, was a permanent power, to be exerciſed at their diſcretion, during the apoſtles' days; (and our author has not proved that it was *not*) it is hard to conceive why this power ſhould be extinct in them all at once, upon the death of the laſt apoſtle, or how the ſupernatural endowments of *one* man ſhould depend upon the natural life of another.

If this power, according to his own ſuppoſition was occaſional, and confer'd only at the time when it was to be exerted, then we ſee leſs reaſon why God ſhould not occaſionally make uſe of the fathers for temporary inſtruments of his power, as well as He had of the apoſtles; ſeeing this will not greatly exalt their characters. He may ſuppoſe *this*, without paying any great compliment to their private abilities, or private judgment; in which they were not under the influence of this power. For to be merely machines of impulſe, requires neither great learning, great abilities, great diſcretion, nor great judgment.

But ſays he, "if we admit the miracles of "the fathers, we muſt admit all the miracles "of

" of every ſucceeding age, down to the pre-
" ſent :" whether this conſequence be juſt or not, ſhall be the ſubject of a future enquiry. At preſent let us examine whether the extenſive end, for which this power was introduced, was fully compleated at the death of the laſt apoſtle. This leads us,

2*dly*, to conſider the queſtion a little in its connexions with the circumſtances of the times, as relating to a religion oppoſed to the then general prevailing prejudices of mankind.

Whether chriſtianity immediately after the death of the apoſtles could be called an eſtabliſhed religion, may be learnt from the concurrent teſtimony of thoſe times, both eccleſiaſtical and profane. It had indeed been propagated with great ſucceſs in the world, and many thouſands both of Jews and Gentiles were converted to the faith. But then its converts were ſtill perſecuted and depreſſed. The *powers* of the world, the rulers and great men were united againſt it: elſe how came the apoſtles themſelves to be martyrs? and their deaths ſurely did not convert their murderers. Mankind then was not yet prepared to admit *rational* evidence alone; ſuch therefore was neceſſary, as was *ſenſible* and extraordinary. *The Jews ſtill required a ſign, and*

the

the Greeks ſought after wiſdom.[i] The Jews would admit no Meſſiah, but ſuch as ſhould come recommended by ſigns anſwerable to their preconceived notions of Him; a victorious prince inveſted with temporal grandeur, who ſhould lead them to poſſeſs the gates of their enemies. The heathens would admit no religion but ſuch as might be conformable to the prejudices of their philoſophy, falſely called wiſdom. If then, in oppoſition to theſe prejudices, the firſt fathers of the church were to *preach Chriſt crucified*;[k] it is highly reaſonable to imagine, that their great maſter would ſend them forth with ſuch credentials, as ſhould prove the chriſtian diſpenſation to be a demonſtration of the *power* of God, as well as of the *wiſdom* of God.

Have any of the rulers, or of the Phariſees believed on him?[l] was no doubt, a queſtion frequently aſked with triumph by the perſecutors in thoſe days. Something therefore was neceſſary to alarm and convince theſe rulers. The ends for which providence had interpoſed at firſt, namely to eſtabliſh a chriſtian church, under a regular and quiet ſubordination of Government, were not yet fully accompliſhed, and therefore there is no good

[i] 1 Cor. i. 22. [k] 1 Cor. i. 23. [l] Joh. vii. 28.

reaſon

reaſon can be given, why the interpoſition ſhould entirely ceaſe. The miracles of Chriſt and his apoſtles had gain'd but little credit with thoſe who would not embrace their doctrine: ſome freſh inſtances of power therefore might be neceſſary to convince the opulent unbeliever, that the Deity *had* once interpoſed in behalf of this deſpiſed religion. Our author perhaps might refer them to the hiſtory of the goſpel for divine evidence: and the goſpel indeed was a faithful hiſtory of miracles: but what ſhould recommend the peruſal of this hiſtory to the prejudiced infidel? Some ſupernatural power was ſtill neceſſary to *open the eyes of the blind, and the ears of the deaf*,[m] and to convert the heart of the harden'd bigot.

To prove, that this was the perſecuted ſtate of the chriſtian church, during the firſt ages of the fathers, that the chriſtian ſect was thus depreſſed, hated, and deſpiſed, we need only appeal to the teſtimony of our author himſelf, who is ſo fair an inquirer *ſometimes*, as to introduce an argument that makes againſt himſelf, when he believes that it will make for him.

"The goſpel indeed,"[n] ſays he, "ſoon be-
"gan to make ſome progreſs among the vul-

[m] Luke VII. 22.

[n] Vid. Free Inquiry, p. 193.

"gar,

" gar, and to gain ſome few alſo of a more " diſtinguiſhed rank, yet continued to be held " in ſuch contempt by the generality of the " better ſort, through the three firſt centu- " ries, that they ſcarce ever thought it worth " while to make any inquiry about it, or to " examine the merit of its pretenſions. The " principal writers of *Rome*, who make any " mention of the chriſtians, about the time " of *Trajan*, plainly ſhew that they knew " nothing more of *them*, or their *religion*, " than what they had pick'd up as it were by " chance, from the groſs miſrepreſentations " of common fame, and ſpeak of them ac- " cordingly, as a ſet of deſpicable, ſtubborn, " and even wicked enthuſiaſts."

A more unfavourable account ſure could hardly be given of chriſtians, and the ſtate of chriſtianity, nor a more favourable one introduced to our preſent point, the expediency of *ſome* divine, ſupernatural aid and ſupport to withſtand theſe difficulties, to animate its preachers, and to gain credit to their religion, in the face of its enemies.

To compleat his evidence in our behalf,* he urges afterwards the difficulty of publiſhing any books of apology in defence of the

* Pag. 197.

chriſtian

chriſtian faith, and of introducing them when publiſhed to men of dignity and fortune, who deſpiſed the authors. "In theſe circumſtances," ſays he, "it cannot be imagined, "that men of figure and fortunes would pay "any attention to the apologies, or writings "of a ſect ſo utterly deſpiſed; eſpecially when "on the one hand, there was no elegance of "ſtile or compoſition to invite them to read." We may conſequently reply that there were not thoſe artifices, which uſually recommend an impoſture. "On the other hand," ſays he, "were all the diſcouragements which the "government could give, to deter them from "reading."

This then, according to our author's lucky repreſentation, as we have it in his own words, was the advantageous ſtate of chriſtianity during the three firſt centuries; this was its peaceable eſtabliſhment in the world. Its profeſſors were hated and deſpiſed; its preachers not attended to; its apologies never read.

And now, ſeeing all theſe impediments were in the way, to oppoſe the admiſſion of any *rational* evidence; what could remain, but ſuch as muſt immediately ſtrike upon the *ſenſes*: ſuch as muſt immediately alarm and convince the beholder, from an evident demonſtration

monſtration of the preſence of the Deity? This we find in proceſs of time forced its way, gradually ſubdued, and as it were, by a kind of violence overcame all the prejudices of mankind: and opened the avenues of the heart to the reception of truth. But when the regular day-light was once admitted, the thunder and lightnings of divine power became no further needful.

But to proceed, not only the powers of the world, but the powers of darkneſs likewiſe, during thoſe ages, had ſtood up united *againſt the Lord, and againſt his Chriſt.*[p] That there *are* certain, malicious, inviſible beings, who *will* the deſtruction of man, cannot be denied by any one, that believes the ſcriptures either of the old or new teſtament. That God for wiſe ends, beſt known to Himſelf, allows them power in this lower world over man, whether for the trial of his faith, the exerciſe of his patience, or the like, is evident from the ſame authority. That they have been ſuffered to effect wonders, to diſorder the bodies of men, to diſtract their minds, and deprive them of their intellectual faculties, many inſtances are recorded, as the cures likewiſe are recorded wrought by Chriſt

[p] Acts iv. 26.

and

and his apoſtles upon ſuch diſtempered ſubjects. That theſe beings ſhould be permitted to exerciſe their malevolent influence, after the days of the apoſtles, *with all power, and ſigns, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableneſs of unrighteouſneſs,*[q] we have no leſs authority to believe, than that of [r] *Jeſus Chriſt* the founder of our faith, and of [s] St. *Paul* and [t] St. *John* eſpecially commiſſioned by Him. Is it not reaſonable therefore to ſuppoſe that the ſame being who permitted theſe evil artifices, ſhould at the ſame time interpoſe an overbalance of his own power to prevent the abſolute deluſion that might ariſe from this *deceivableneſs*; to ſecure his authority; together with the moral and religious rectitude and happineſs of his people; to provide, that they might not deceive, *even his elect?* For a miracle unoppoſed is ſo far an evidence for the religion it is wrought to confirm: where the miracles are unequal, the exceſs of the greater is a proof of the greater power, and if we ſuppoſe inferior beings to be engaged in oppoſition to the divine, is a proof of the interpoſition of the latter.

This principle is founded on the truth of God, who will not ſuffer his credentials to be

[q] 2 Theſſ. ii. 9, 10.
[s] 2 Theſſ. ii. 9.
[r] Matt. xxiv. 24.
[t] Rev. xiii. 13.

ſo

ſo far uſurp'd, or counterfeited by evil beings, without any oppoſition, that his good and righteous ſervants muſt inevitably be deceived by them. Wherefore if the magicians turn their rods into ſerpents, in imitation of *Aaron*; the rod of *Aaron* ſhall devour their rods. If the magicians ſhall call up frogs upon the land, in imitation of *Aaron*, God permitteth the deluſion thus far, to ſhew his greater power: for the magicians ſhall not be able to remove them: *Moſes* and *Aaron* muſt be ſent for, *to intreat the Lord, to take away his plague from the land.*[u] So the divine power will be eminently diſtinguiſhed, whilſt the oppoſers are called upon to effect the ſame wonders, and *cannot*. If *Aaron* by his rod hath turned the duſt of the earth into lice, and the magicians are called upon, and eſſay to do the ſame, but the duſt will not *live* at their command, then they may reaſonably conclude, as we find they did, *that it was the finger of God,*[w] whereby *Aaron* acted. This argument, added to the internal worth of the doctrine, will always be a ſatisfactory proof.

That God has ever permitted any deluſions at all by the influence of evil ſpirits, ſtrongly

[u] Exodus viii. 8. [w] Exodus viii. 19.

proves the expediency of ſome contrary operations, but is no argument againſt his juſtice. For in caſes where men have been deceived by lying wonders, they have themſelves, like *Pharaoh*, contributed to the deluſion. They have helped to deceive themſelves. They received not the love of the truth, and thereby they called in the power of the deluder, and gave him opportunity to operate with ſucceſs. They have pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs, and are therefore unwilling to open their eyes to that light, which upbraids their conduct. They are fond to catch at any argument that may juſtify their lives, and follow any guide that ſhall ſet them free from the reſtraints of righteouſneſs. No wonder therefore that when moral agents are thus bent upon deluſion, God ſhould judicially deliver them up, as He did *Pharaoh*, to the power of the deluder, and that evil ſpirits ſhould be ready to compleat the conqueſt. But then we may as reaſonably infer, that the God of truth will at the ſame time interpoſe ſuch an over-balance of his power, as will not ſuffer his *ſincere* and *upright* ſervants to be led away by this craft of *lying wonders*, that He will *not ſuffer the righteous to fall for ever.*[x]

[x] Pſ. lv. 23.

If

If then evil ſpirits were permitted in the firſt centuries, to poſſeſs, and diſturb the bodies, and minds of men, that is, if the prophecies of Chriſt, and his apoſtles were fulfilled, it is reaſonable to conclude, that the pious fathers ſhould be inveſted with a contrary authority, to command them to go forth againſt their wills; to eject them from their ſtrong holds; and thereby demonſtrate the ſuperiority of that power, which favoured divine truth.

Such was the expediency of ſome divine interpoſitions during the firſt centuries of the chriſtian church: of a ſociety thus oppoſed, perſecuted, deſpiſed. And we have as good teſtimony for a foundation to ſupport our belief of the reality of ſuch interpoſitions, as for any other point of hiſtorical fact.[y] Why then ſhould we withold our aſſent? A queſtion may be aſk'd, whether our author thinks, that the Deity *ever* interpoſed in behalf of chriſtianity? if he does *not*, then he owns

[y] The objections raiſed by our author againſt the credit of the fathers, and their hiſtories have been particularly conſidered already by ſome ingenious gentlemen, in their examinations of his treatiſe, ſee *Mr. Dodwell's free anſwer*; *Mr. Jackſon's remarks*; and *the letter to the Rev. Dr. Middleton:* and therefore I ſhall not concern myſelf with thoſe points, as being foreign to the deſign of theſe diſcourſes, which was only to ſhew the *uſe* and *expediency* of the powers; and the invalidity of a conſequence with which he would charge the belief of thoſe powers in the chriſtian fathers.

himſelf no longer a chriſtian: if he *does*, then we aſk whether it is not more reaſonable to believe, that God ſhould continue this interpoſition, till the end was fully anſwered in the civil eſtabliſhment of this religion; than to ſuppoſe that a ſociety thus oppoſed could make its progreſs unſupported; and ſo labour to give up all faith of hiſtory, which atteſts the grant of divine aid?

The aſſiſtances of *divine grace* are, even to this day, a continual addition of ſupernatural power to man. If our author denies this aſſiſtance, he muſt at the ſame time give up the new teſtament, and deny one of the principal privileges of a chriſtian. *Are not your bodies the temples of the Holy Ghoſt which dwelleth in you?*[z] ſaith St. Paul to the Corinthians: and to the Philippians, *it is God that worketh in you, to will, and to do, according to his good pleaſure.*[a] If he does *not* deny it, then here is one inſtance of ſupernatural power ſtill ſubſiſting in the church. A power, which though not ſenſible in its operations, is yet fruitful in its effects. A power, which anſwers all the ends for which at preſent it can be wanted, namely, the guidance of individuals to eternal happineſs.

[z] 1 Cor. vi. 19. [a] Philipp. ii. 13.

But

But when a guidance or direction was wanting to univerſal bodies, or whole ſocieties of men, the operations muſt be ſuch as would affect thoſe bodies; not *internal*, and confined to individuals; but *external*, *viſible*, and apprehenſible by the ſenſes of whole ſocieties at once.

Let not any man therefore argue that the facts recorded by the firſt fathers are incredible, becauſe they are extraordinary. For what miracles are not in their very nature ſuch? Neither let us ſay, that the fathers could not be inveſted with theſe powers; either becauſe they were men of human infirmity, and human fallibility; for ſo were *Barnabas*, *Paul*, and *Peter*: or becauſe they held private opinions, which he thinks erroneous; for ſo did *Peter* when he judaized. But no chriſtian will deny, that Peter *in the name of Jeſus Chriſt of Nazareth*, enabled the impotent man to *riſe up and walk*,[b] becauſe he had a little before denied his Maſter. In ſhort, *Peter*'s miracles were not wrought to recommend his Jewiſh conformity, or canonize his infirmities, but to eſtabliſh the truth of chriſtianity in general. And the ſame may be ſaid of the miraculous powers intruſted to the firſt fathers.

[b] Acts III. 6.

The authority of theſe holy men has frequently been urged with ſucceſs by proteſtants in their diſputes with papiſts, and is a ſtanding bulwark of our cauſe in many points againſt them. That the belief of hiſtorical facts related by the fathers, will give no countenance to the church of *Rome*, in her pretended miracles, ſhall, God willing, be the ſubject of my next diſcourſe. In the mean time let us not give up the credit of *all* hiſtory, but *profane*, to the crude hypotheſis of every fanciful Writer, how fruitful ſoever his imagination; how fluent ſoever his pen may be. For though proteſtantiſm may ſtand in need of the vigorous aid and defence of its friends, amidſt all the various aſſaults of its enemies, in their different ſhapes and colours; yet proteſtants can never be thankful to ſuch defenders, who pull down one part of the fabric, under a pretence of repairing or ſupporting the other. Should we ſay that our author is inwardly an adverſary to the chriſtian faith itſelf, he might perhaps exclaim againſt the treatment, as not more candid, or equitable, than that, whereof we accuſe *him*, with regard to the ancient fathers, in miſrepreſenting the principles upon which they wrote. And yet from external appearances, we can have no great foundation in reaſon to eſteem

eſteem that General a friendly ally to any country, who is daily making all the inroads and incroachments he can upon its frontiers. At leaſt it would be but prudent in that country, to be upon its guard againſt him. Let us then be cautious how we admit ſuch argument for demonſtration, how ſpeciouſly ſoever recommended by its addreſs, which is founded upon begged unproved principles; proceeds upon miſrepreſentation; and when thoroughly ſifted, can ſcarce be ſtiled the ſhadow of ſound reaſoning. But as we would guard againſt the ſlavery of credulous ſuperſtition on the *one* hand, ſo let us beware leſt we be led away by the *ſlight, and cunning craftineſs* of ſceptical deſigning men, *who lye in wait to deceive* on the *other*.[c]

May the God of truth direct our hearts and thoughts aright in the purſuit of truth, and eternal happineſs, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord!

[c] Epheſ. IV. 14.

DISCOURSE IV.

The Inexpediency of miraculous Powers claimed by the Church of Rome, *conſidered.*—Preached before the Univerſity of *Oxford*, on *Sunday*, *July* 9, 1749.

MARK XVI. 17, 18.

And theſe Signs ſhall follow them that believe; in my Name ſhall they caſt out Devils, they ſhall ſpeak with New Tongues;

They ſhall take up Serpents, and if they drink any deadly Thing, it ſhall not hurt them; they ſhall lay Hands on the Sick, and they ſhall recover.

THIS promiſe was made to the firſt chriſtians by our Saviour, immediately before his aſcenſion into heaven. The feaſt of

of pentecoſt was the day of its completion. That this promiſe was intended to confer a *durable, permanent* Power, ſeems to follow from the manner in which it was fulfilled. The diſciples were to wait all together at *Jeruſalem* till they were endued *with power from on high.*[a] For if this power was only convey'd to the apoſtles occaſionally, juſt at the time it was to be exerted, what need was there for them to tarry all together at *Jeruſalem*, for the reception of it all at once? But it was confer'd on them all at one time, aſſembled in one place, and ſenſible evidence was given to them of the conveyance; therefore we may conclude that it was to remain with them, a *diſcretionary* power, to be exerciſed as their own prudence, and the Holy Ghoſt attending them ſhould direct.

But this may further appear from the directions given by St. *Paul* to the firſt chriſtians, concerning the exerciſe of their ſpiritual gifts, which would have been needleſs, had not the gifts been *permanent* and *diſcretionary*. For if they had been only *occaſional, temporary* infuſions, chriſtians could not well have err'd about the application of them. They would have known the time of exerciſing the

[a] Luke xxiv. 49.

power

power from the time of receiving its impulſe; and have diſcern'd their proper gifts by the gifts conferr'd: as the Holy Spirit likewiſe at the ſame time would, no doubt, have actuated its machines in a proper manner of applying them. The Holy Ghoſt would never at the very time of exerting itſelf have miſapplied its operations, nor have *ſpoke with tongues*, when it ought rather to have *propheſied*, or *interpreted*.

But further, if theſe ſpiritual gifts were mere temporary impulſes of the ſpirit, why could not any *one* of the diſciples, at the proper time or exigency, have been impell'd to *heal*, and to *prophecy*, and to *diſcern ſpirits*, and to *ſpeak divers kinds of tongues*, and to *interpret tongues*, as well as *another*? Whereas theſe gifts appear to have been ſingular, and proper to peculiar perſons, reſiding in them according to their reſpective offices. And they were committed to each, as permanent, diſcretionary talents, to profit withal. *The manifeſtation of the ſpirit*, ſaith the apoſtle, *is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the ſpirit the word of wiſdom; to another the word of knowledge by the ſame ſpirit; to another faith by the ſame ſpirit; to another the gifts of healing by the ſame ſpirit; to another the working of miracles;*

racles; to another prophecy; to another the diſcerning of ſpirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues.[b]

Theſe were the ſupernatural manifeſtations of the Holy Ghoſt, diſpenſed among the Corinthian converts, to whom the apoſtle wrote this epiſtle. The time of their continuance in the chriſtian church has been made a point of debate by a modern writer. In my laſt diſcourſe therefore upon this ſubject, I endeavour'd to ſtate and inforce the expediency of *ſome* divine interpoſitions, during the firſt ages or centuries of chriſtianity, from the nature of the end to be ſerved by them, and the circumſtances of the church. For the expediency of the means to the end propoſed, muſt certainly add weight to the credibility of the facts well atteſted.

We do not indeed pretend to carry our argument of expediency ſo far as to ſay, theſe miraculous powers were expedient, and therefore *this*, or *that* particular miracle was certainly wrought. But we ſay thus; *ſome* divine interpoſitions appear to have been expedient, during the infancy of chriſtianity, in the firſt centuries, and therefore it is not incredible,

[b] 1 Cor. xii. 7—10.

that

that miraculous powers might be granted to the firſt preachers of it, in thoſe centuries: *ſome* miraculous facts are *well atteſted* by the beſt and moſt pious writers of chriſtian antiquity; the *powers* alſo are ſhewn expedient to the promotion of a good, univerſal end, in behalf of which the Deity *had once* interpoſed, and therefore the facts, are highly credible.

But, ſays a certain writer, if we admit the miraculous powers of the primitive fathers, we muſt neceſſarily embrace all the ſucceeding pretended miracles of the papiſts. This leads me, as was propoſed, under my

Second general head; to ſhew, that this conſequence is not juſt: and that the ſuppoſal of ſome divine interpoſitions in favour of chriſtianity, during the firſt centuries of the chriſtian church, can give no countenance, or ground of credit to the pretended miracles of the church of *Rome*.

Our author, to make his concluſion valid, ſhould firſt ſhew that circumſtances are the ſame *now*, in the *Romiſh* church, as they were in the *ancient*, chriſtian, catholick church. For where men argue by analogy from the incredibility of facts in *one* age, to the incredibility of them in *another*, they ſhould no doubt ſhew the circumſtances of thoſe ages to

be

be alike, or elſe, where is the analogy, if there is no likeneſs?

Now, in my former diſcourſe, I have ſhewn, from our author's own repreſentation, that chriſtianity during the three firſt centuries at leaſt, was in a depreſſed, perſecuted, and deſpiſed ſtate. Its preachers were hated; its doctrines unattended to; its apologies never read; books of defence could not be publiſhed without great difficulty; nor, if ſome few copies *were* publiſhed, could they find acceſs to the courts of princes, to men of dignity and fortune. All *rational* evidence then was excluded, and ſuch only could gain admittance, as was *ſenſible* and *ſupernatural*. But now, where is the likeneſs between the ſtate of the chriſtian church in *thoſe* days, and that of the *church of Rome* at preſent? Where is the analogy either between the circumſtances of the *times*, or the expediency of the *means* to the end propoſed, namely the confirmation, and eſtabliſhment of the goſpel in the world? The church of *Rome* is in a ſettled, flouriſhing ſtate; the men of fortune and dignity are on its ſide; and its prieſts are at the helm of power. She lays claim indeed to miraculous gifts, but wherein are her miracles ſimilar in circumſtances either of expediency, or manner of pro-

production to thoſe of the firſt fathers? Are the *Romiſh* miracles wrought among enemies? *publicly* wrought for the converſion of enemies? ſubject to the inſpection and examination of enemies? No: her wonders have none of theſe ſignatures of truth ſtampt upon them. *Her* wonders are made up of things that are pretended to be wrought, in a country already converted to chriſtianity: wrought before friends in private, and then related to the credulous multitude: wrought to ſerve private ends, and without liberty of examination forced by mere authority of the prieſts, upon the ſuperſtitious minds of the populace.

If we argue in the abſtract, upon this general allowed maxim of philoſophy, *that God never acts in vain*; we may conclude that when the end is accompliſh'd, for which He firſt interpoſed, the interpoſitions ſhall ceaſe. For the all-wiſe Being, we may be aſſured, never applies *uſeleſs* means; as He will never be defective in any that are *neceſſary*. The end for which miraculous powers were firſt beſtow'd, was the eſtabliſhment of chriſtianity. But chriſtianity *is* the eſtabliſh'd religion of the *Romiſh* countries; therefore the *end* being attain'd, the *means* are uſeleſs.

If we argue from circumſtances, as above, they appear to be moſt unlike, and therefore there

there can be no analogy. The miraculous powers of former ages may have been true, where miracles are not *now*; becauſe miracles in former ages were expedient, where they are not *at preſent*.

Let us here ſtop, and examine a little our author's manner of argumentation. He proceeds by induction from ſome *few particular* inſtances, to a *general* concluſion; and becauſe ſome few ridiculous ſtories, which he hath collected, or rather *made* ſo, by his manner of repreſenting them, are not credible, therefore he concludes that no other miracles *can* be. A concluſion ſurely very extenſive! Again, becauſe there are no well atteſted inſtances of dæmoniacks, ſorcery, or witchcraft, in the *preſent* age; therefore there were no demoniacks, witches, or ſorcerers in *former* ages: that is, becauſe the power of the devil is now *ceaſed*, therefore he never *had* any power: and the denunciations of the apoſtles againſt ſorceries and witchcrafts were of little uſe: becauſe the preſent miracles of the church of *Rome* are all falſe and ſpurious, therefore thoſe of the primitive ages of chriſtianity were ſo likewiſe: that is, becauſe God does not think fit to interpoſe in behalf of an *eſtabliſh'd* religion, therefore He did not think fit to interpoſe in behalf of a *perſecuted* church:

church: of a church which He had began to plant with his *own right hand:* becauſe the miracles of the *Pagans* were falſe, therefore thoſe of the *firſt Chriſtians* cannot be true: that is, becauſe God did not think fit to bear teſtimony to a *falſe* religion, therefore He would never bear teſtimony to a *true* one.

The church of *Rome* wants not only the argument of expediency, for divine interpoſition in her favour, as being an eſtabliſh'd religion, but it wants likewiſe the internal evidence, and worth of the doctrines, in ſupport of which this feign'd aſſiſtance is aſſumed. For men may lay claim to what aids and aſſiſtances of the ſpirit they pleaſe, yet we cannot be more aſſured of any one truth than this, that a God of infinite veracity cannot interfere in behalf of manifeſt abſurdities, ſuch as the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation among the *Papiſts* plainly is; yet in behalf of which many of their miracles are maintained to be wrought.

But we are aſked, if we believe the miraculous powers of the firſt fathers, where ſhall we ſtop? This leads me to the

Third thing propoſed; namely to make ſuch obſervations ariſing from what has been ſaid, as may help us forward, towards aſſigning a probable time in general for the ceſſa-

tion of miracles, and to anſwer ſome few objections, and queſtions, which may have been propoſed.

Now here we cannot pretend to fix upon any particular, *determinate* point of time, when theſe powers muſt *neceſſarily* have expired, eſpecially in all countries at once, any more than we can enter into the counſels of the Almighty, or preſcribe to Him how long He ſhall exert his power, and no longer. But if we have ſhewn a time, from our author's *own* repreſentation, when miracles continued to be expedient to the great end, for which they were firſt introduced, namely the quiet eſtabliſhment of chriſtianity in the world: if afterwards we can diſcover a time, when they became *inexpedient* to this end; i. e. when chriſtianity was peaceably eſtabliſhed under the protection of the civil power; then we may aſſign the intervening portion of time, between the periods, when this expediency commenced, and ended, for the probable continuation of miraculous powers in the church. This diſquiſition muſt depend upon hiſtorical enquiries, and falls not within the purpoſe, or limits of a diſcourſe from this place. *This* however we may obſerve in general, from our author's *own* treatiſe, that he has ſhewn them to be expedient, during the

three

three firſt centuries at leaſt, by ſhewing, that chriſtianity, which was the religion to be eſtabliſhed by them, continued ſo long in a depreſſed, perſecuted, and deſpiſed ſtate; incapable of gaining any admiſſion to the civil powers by any *rational* evidence; dependent therefore upon ſuch as muſt immediately and cogently ſtrike upon the *ſenſes*. If within a certain aſſignable ſpace of time afterwards, chriſtianity became an eſtabliſhed religion, under the favour and countenance of the civil power, and fixt its habitation in the world; to that time, or near it, we may fix the æra, when its ſupernatural ſupports were withdrawn, as becoming no longer needful.

But yet, why they ſhould ſtop in all kingdoms and provinces at the ſame moment, no ſubſtantial reaſon can be given, if they continued to be wanting in one country, or in any one province of the ſame country, longer than another. There *may* have been a twilight of divine manifeſtation, a certain medium, in the *religious*, as in the *natural* world, between meridian light, and nocturnal darkneſs; between the brighteſt illuminations of power, and their total ceſſation. The tranſition from extraordinary and wonderful interpoſition, to the abſolute removal of all miraculous evidence might have been too ſudden.

But it no more follows, that becauſe ſome divine interpoſitions were expedient, during the firſt centuries of chriſtianity, therefore all the ſubſequent miracles of the church of *Rome* ſhould be expedient likewiſe, or even *uſeful* in ſucceeding ages; than it follows, that becauſe a child in its infancy cannot walk by its own natural ſtrength, therefore he ſhould ſtand in need of ſome artificial ſupport in confirm'd manhood. In ſhort, it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that the ſame divine providence which form'd it, as it were an infant in the womb, and cheriſh'd it at its birth, ſhould continue to be its guide and ſupport, till other guardians were provided for it; *till kings became its nurſing fathers, and queens its nurſing mothers.*[c] But when by this countenance and aid it was arrived at more mature proportion, we may reaſonably conclude, that it would be left to its own natural ſtrength, to ſupport itſelf by the nerves of reaſon and ſound argument.

Nor can any good reaſon be given, why *ſome* ſpiritual gifts might not be withdrawn from the church, ſooner than *others*, as they became leſs requiſite to promote their ends. Our author makes it a mark of impoſture in the primitive fathers, with reſpect to *other* powers, that the gift of tongues, the moſt

[c] Iſai. xlix. 23.

difficult

difficult of any to be counterfeited, was the ſooneſt withdrawn, and left without pretenders to it. Whereas a good reaſon might be aſſign'd for this difference: for when preachers of the goſpel were not obliged to travel from one nation to another, in order to propagate the goſpel; that is, when in every nation, preachers were grown up, of its own countrymen, properly qualified to execute this office, then we may ſuppoſe, that the gift of tongues being no longer expedient, might conſequently be withdrawn. But *other* gifts might yet notwithſtanding be convey'd to thoſe preachers, for their confirmation againſt the oppreſſions of the world; for the conviction of unbelievers; to gain reſpect and attention to their doctrine from their *own* countrymen.

But ſtill we are aſked, if we admit the miraculous powers of the primitive fathers, where ſhall we ſtop? Why, ſuppoſe we know not the exact period where to ſtop, does it follow that theſe powers therefore never exiſted in the fathers? It may perhaps be impoſſible for us to know preciſely where to ſtop, in things tranſacted at ſuch a diſtance; in things which depended entirely upon the determinations of divine wiſdom, after many hiſtories of thoſe times have been long ex-

tinct. In *ſome* things we may be able to fix the boundaries of ſcience; but in caſes of *moral* evidence it may be very difficult to determine where the bounds of moral truth end, or thoſe of falſhood begin. For inſtance, where ſhall we fix the diſtance of probable truth, in facts related upon human teſtimony from remote countries, in our *own* age? Many ſeeming improbabilities ariſing from the remoteneſs, and variety of climates, have yet been in themſelves real truths. Many falſehoods on the contrary, have put on the face of probability, and been reported with ſucceſs. But if we have received falſe relations from the diſtance of a *thouſand* miles, ſhall we confine all truth to the diſtance of *five hundred?* and withdraw our belief from every thing beyond? If we cannot fix any diſtances of truth as to remote regions, muſt we believe either *every* thing, or *nothing*, that we are told concerning them? ſo although we cannot point out the preciſe period of time for the expiration of miraculous powers in the primitive fathers, muſt we believe *every* miracle that is told us upon the *ſlighteſt* grounds? or believe *none* that are related upon the *beſt* authority? ſurely this would be a very extenſive way of inferring concluſions! In ſhort the character of the witneſſes in all other reſpects,

ſpects, added to the expediency of the facts, as means to ſome good end, ſhould be our criterion in ſuch caſes.

The age of uncontеſted hiſtories is uſually a recommendation of them, and that they have kept their ground with approbation for many years, is generally look'd upon as a good preſumptive argument in favour of their authority. But it is not ſo, it ſeems, with reſpect to the chriſtian fathers. And yet what reaſon can be given why *they* in particular ſhould be excepted from the benefit of this rule? were there no enemies to chriſtianity in the *primitive* times to examine facts, as well as in *our* days? No *ſcepticks* in thoſe ages, who would have been ready to detect the pious fraud, and expoſe the holy impoſture? or is the taſk of repelling error reſerv'd to the diſtance of above a thouſand years? when all the circumſtances that confirm'd the facts are not known? when many hiſtories are loſt? reſerved for a man of might, much wiſer than all his pedeceſſors in the field; of more daring courage to confront, and of acuter talents to detect any inſidious falſhood?

If he can find any imperfection or weakneſs in the books of thoſe venerable writers, or their way of expreſſing things by figures and emblems, which was more to be attributed

buted to the cuſtoms of the times, and the prevailing manner of expreſſing ſentiments in thoſe days, than to any abſurdity in the meaning of the writers themſelves, he induſtriouſly collects them together, and places them in their full light: yet if any ingenious perſon were to collect, and as artfully heighten every idle ſuperſtitious ſentence, that may be found, in his own favourite author, concerning the deification of his own daughter, or any prevailing notions of the times in which he lived; to aggravate, and draw forced concluſions from thoſe paſſages which expreſs his ambition, his baſe puſillanimity, his mean dejection under adverſity, and the like; the heathen philoſopher, *Tully*, might appear in full as ridiculous a garb, as the chriſtian father, *Irenæus*. But the treatment would be equally cruel with regard to *either* of them, to exclude *either*, on this account, from the poſſibility of being in other reſpects a judicious writer. The truth is, we do not pretend to ſay that the fathers were divinely inſpired in all their writings, like the ſacred penmen in the holy ſcriptures, though even *there* St. *Paul* tells his converts in one place, where he gives his *own* opinion as a man, where *he* ſpeaks, *and not the Lord*;[d] yet for

[d] 1 Cor. VII. 12.

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a general teſtimony to the truth, they might in *ſome* caſes be aided with extraordinary gifts. Spiritual gifts, though they made them *powerful preachers* of the goſpel, yet ſtill left them *frail, imperfect men*. If then ſome of thoſe good and pious men, to whom theſe powers were committed, held particular opinions, we are not obliged to follow their opinions, but ſcripture: if ſome of them to avoid the ſnares and temptations of the world, and become inſtances of ſtricter abſtinence and virtue, choſe to lead a retired and ſolitary life, their choice of life is no juſtification of the preſent luxury or indolence of modern monkery.

But an objection is made to the places, or forms, in which the powers of the fathers were exerciſed, becauſe they have been ſince miſapplied, and converted to evil purpoſes by the church of *Rome*. Now if a divine anſwer was given, in conſequence of any appeals made by the fathers, at the tombs of the martyrs, we may fairly ſay, that it was not given to confirm the virtue or ſanctity of their relicts, but the truly chriſtian doctrines of religion and morality taught by the fathers: not to inſtruct the world that the bones of martyrs were to be worſhipped, but that the catholic doctrines delivered by thoſe

martyrs,

martyrs, and taught by the fathers were worthy of God, and of divine confirmation: not to ſanctify *private* opinions, or *particular* modes of life, but to recommend chriſtian faith in general. If ſome public place muſt have been choſen where the appeal might be made, what place more proper than the church of God, where the congregation was aſſembled? And if the *feet* of the martyrs was at any time the moſt conſpicuous place, it might therefore be made *there*, to confirm the doctrine of the martyrs. The church of *Rome* may have perverted this practice afterwards to evil purpoſes, but they want the argument of expediency, and many other circumſtances to confirm their miracles, in the midſt of a friendly country. There was no intrinſic energy in the *tombs* or *relics* of the martyrs: neither was there any intrinſic efficacy in the *clay*, to open the eyes of the blind, in our Saviour's time. Yet we read, *that he ſpat on the ground, and made clay, and anointed the eyes of the blind man therewith,*[e] and gave him ſight. The reaſon was, *ſome* viſible means were thought proper to be made uſe of, and then *clay*, being as indifferent as any, and as viſibly inadequate to the

[e] John ix. 6.

effect,

effect, was thought as proper, as any other, to be applied. Thus *Moſes* by divine direction ſmote the rock twice with his rod, not to ſhew that there was any internal force in the rod to make the waters flow; but to prove to the *Iſraelites* by *viſible tokens*, that divine power was their ſupport, and that in conſequence of this appeal to God, *the waters guſhed out, and the ſtream flowed withal.*[s] And thus when ſome appeal was to be made to the Deity by the fathers, to confirm a religion truly divine, it was thought proper that it ſhould be made in ſome open place, and by ſome viſible ſigns, to convince the audience that the Deity anſwer'd the appeal made by the application of theſe ſigns. The duſt of the martyrs had no more efficacy in it than common clay: but the ſanctuaries of the martyrs, being in places dedicated to holy aſſemblies, and holy purpoſes, might be judged proper places of addreſs to the Deity for divine aſſiſtance. That ſuch miracles are now counterfeited in the ſame places, by the church of *Rome*, when they can anſwer no real religious purpoſes, is no more an argument, that they were never wrought, when they *could*, than if the church of *Rome* were

[s] Pſ. LXXVIII. 21.

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to pretend *now* to reſtore ſight to the blind, by an ointment of clay, it would follow, that our Saviour had never perform'd the cure, by the uſe of the ſame inadequate means. Or that *Moſes* had never by the ſtroke of his rod *fetched water out of the ſtony rock*, if a popiſh prieſt ſhould pretend in theſe days to have effected the ſame wonder.

I am not now concern'd about vindicating facts, but weighing conſequences. And here I ſay, that the abuſes of things are no argument againſt their realities; nor modern pretenſions to powers, a proof that they *never* exiſted. And it no more follows that the tombs, or duſt of the martyrs could not have been made uſe of by the firſt fathers, as ſenſible ſigns of ſome power to be wrought, in conſequence of an appeal to the Deity, by the application of thoſe ſigns, becauſe the church of *Rome* now makes relics an object of worſhip; than it would follow, if our Saviour's garment were now in being, and the papiſts worſhip'd it, that in our Saviour's time, *as many as touched the hem of his garment, could not have been made whole.*[g] Or than it would follow, that if St. *Paul*'s handkerchiefs or aprons were in their poſſeſ-

[g] Matt. IX. 20. and XIV. 36.

ſion,

ſion, and made an object of their adoration, therefore it could never have been true, *that God wrought ſpecial miracles by the hands of* Paul, *ſo that from his body were brought unto the ſick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diſeaſes departed from them, and the evil ſpirits went out of them.*[h]

In ſhort, God at this very time annexes ſacramental grace to the uſe of outward ſacramental means: why might He not then in the firſt ages, for the ſatisfaction and more ready conviction of the beholders, annex ſupernatural gifts likewiſe to the uſe of extraordinary viſible ſigns?

The river *Jordan* had no more *natural* efficacy in it to heal the leproſy, than *Abana* and *Pharpar*, rivers of *Damaſcus*, yet God was pleaſed to appoint this viſible means to heal *Naaman*. But it does no more follow, that the river *Jordan* is now intitled, on this account, to any veneration from its neighbouring inhabitants, than it follows, that the pool of *Bethesda* can heal now, or is to be worſhipped in theſe days.

The objections made to the credibility of ſome miracles of the fathers, ſeem to be principally grounded on their ſtrangeneſs, or

[h] Acts xix. 11, 12.

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greatneſs, without any remembrance of that general promiſe of our Saviour, *Verily, verily I ſay unto you, he that believeth, on me,* (the words we ſee are general, not confined to the perſons of the apoſtles) *the works that I do, ſhall he do alſo, and greater works than theſe ſhall he do, becauſe I go unto my father; and whatſoever ye aſk in my name, that will I do, that the father may be glorified in the ſon.*[i] The very words imply ſome vouchſafement of *peculiar* power by the ſon to true believers, wherein the glory of the father might be more conſpicuouſly diſplayed.

That the gift of healing was not confined to the perſons of the apoſtles, or to their days, we may conclude from the general direction of St. *James*, added to ſome other general precepts, given to the *Jewiſh* converts, without limitation of time to *that* age only: *Is any ſick among you? let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith ſhall ſave the ſick: and the Lord ſhall raiſe him up; and if he have committed ſins, they ſhall be forgiven him.*[k] Here is a promiſe made; perſons aſſigned, to whom a gift of healing

[i] John xiv. 12, 13.

[k] James v. 14, 15.

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is communicated; namely the *elders* of the church: a ſign inſtituted; namely that of *unction*; but no *time* is limited; no confinement to the *apoſtolic* age: we believe therefore, upon good credit of hiſtory, this power to have continued ſome time after, in the church: i. e. as long as extraordinary marks of divine favour were neceſſary for its ſupport. If our author would confine this direction concerning the ſending for the elders of the church, and the expreſs intimation concerning their power to recover the ſick, to the days of the apoſtles, he might with a little more pains, confine the former general directions, in the preceding verſe likewiſe, and ſay that none *that were afflicted, ſhould pray*, or none *that were merry, ſhould ſing pſalms*,[1] after the age of the apoſtles. For the expreſſion in one verſe is as indefinite, as in the other, and to be limited only by circumſtances of expediency, and the like. It is not ſaid let him ſend for the *apoſtles*, but indefinitely let him ſend for the *elders* or *prieſts*. But we ſee the inconſiſtency of our author in different places, who, according to his reſpective purpoſes, can be the moſt *credulous*, and at the ſame time the moſt *incre-*

[1] James v. 13.

dulous

dulous man living: who, on account of a [n] ſtory brought from *Paris*, can believe that an hundred men might ſpeak *without* tongues in a natural way; and yet cannot believe that an equal number of men might, in the days of the holy fathers, ſpeak divers languages *with* tongues, by the inſpiration of the Almighty.

We may add one remark further, to what has been obſerved in favour of the continuation of miraculous powers; that by a kind of natural influence on the preſent conſtitution of man, miracles were beſt adapted to promote the ſpeedy reception, and eſtabliſhment of chriſtianity in the world, throughout the firſt centuries. The minds of the illiterate, and common people, are for the moſt part, much more ſtrongly affected by *ſenſible* objects, eſpecially ſuch as are *extraordinary*, than by cloſe, and long deductions of *reaſon*. For the *ſenſes* cannot but anſwer the impreſſions made upon them by outward objects: *they* cannot but make their report to the ſoul, from thence: *they* are open, even in men whoſe *underſtandings* are clogged and overwhelmed with prejudices: *they* are ſtrong and quick, even in men whoſe *intellects* are weak, and dull.

[n] Free Inquiry, page 184.

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The firſt ſenſations of things, and perceptions of ſimple ideas, are neceſſary, determinate, and ſimilar in all. *They* are not, by any force of the underſtanding, to be deſtroyed at pleaſure: *they* are not improved by education, nor weakened by want of literature; but depend upon the natural organization of the nervous filaments. Any extraordinary impreſſions therefore upon *them*, are calculated to awaken the peaſant, as well as to alarm the philoſopher. And when the *intellects* are awakened by the calls of *ſenſe*, they may afterwards apply themſelves vigorouſly, and attentively, to the conſideration, and improvement of *rational evidence*. Thus the firſt impreſſion upon the ſenſes would be the act, and free grace of the Deity; men's improvement of it, and their conſequent faith, would be their own virtue.

As we find then, that the Deity in compliance with our faculties, in other inſtances, has ordain'd *viſible* tokens of his operations, and graces, and actuates men according to what they *are*, namely *ſenſitive*, as well as *intellectual* beings; ſo where *his* teſtimony was required, to the ſupport of a doctrine revealed by *him*, it is reaſonable to conclude, that this teſtimony would be adapted to the

reſpective capacities of thoſe his creatures, for whoſe benefit it was delivered. Accordingly St. *Paul* ſays, *we ſpeak* wiſdom *to thoſe that are* perfect;[n] to thoſe that were of capacities to receive *rational conviction*, the apoſtles argued by force of *reaſon*, upon the great myſteries of chriſtianity: but to his converts, the *Corinthians* in general, he ſaith, *my ſpeech, and my preaching was not among you, with enticing words of man's wiſdom, but in demonſtration of the ſpirit, and of power:*[o] it conſiſted in ſomething that might alarm, and gain the attention of the ſenſes, in order the more readily and effectually to convince the underſtanding; *that your faith ſhould not ſtand in the* wiſdom *of* men, *but in the* power *of* God.[p] Our author in like manner excludes the holy fathers from "elegance of ſtyle, or compoſition, to "invite men to read:" conſequently the greater need was there, why they ſhould be ſupported, in a ſimilar manner, *by demonſtration of the ſpirit, and of power.*

We may reaſonably conclude from the might, wiſdom, and goodneſs of God, whoſe graces and gifts are all perfect in their kind, that this power would continue to operate,

[n] 1 Cor. ii. 6. [o] 1 Cor. ii. 4. [p] 1 Cor. ii. 5.

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as long as the Deity ſhould find it expedient to the end propoſed, namely the peaceable eſtabliſhment of the revelation required, to promote the *happineſs* of his creatures. For the Deity is not weary in well-doing: and all exertions of power, whether they appear *ordinary*, or *extraordinary* to *us*, are *equal* to *Him*, whoſe might is infinite. *Haſt thou not known? haſt thou not heard*, (ſaith the prophet concerning the diſpenſation of the goſpel kingdom,) *that the everlaſting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary? He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might, He increaſeth ſtrength. Behold the Lord God will come with ſtrong hand, and his arm ſhall rule for Him.*[q]

The conſtant courſe of nature is a continued proof of his exiſtence, power, and wiſdom. When the proof of a revelation from Him is required, a repeated interruption of this common courſe, ſhall be an evidence of his agency, who alone can ſuſpend the univerſal laws of nature: and whilſt mankind are aſtoniſhed at the effect, the truth of God ſhall be eſtabliſhed.

Our author has proved, that *ſome* divine teſtimony was wanting, to recommend chriſ-

[q] Iſai. xl. 10, 28, 29.

tianity, after the age of the apoſtles. *Senſible* tokens, according to the common nature of man, would be moſt apt, and ſpeedy in their operation, to affect the minds of the populace: they might be requiſite, to *convert* the hearts of *many*, and to command their attention to the goſpel hiſtory; requiſite, to *confirm* the wavering faith of *others*, in the *belief* of it; therefore we think it not unreaſonable to believe, that ſuch influences might be continued, after the apoſtolic age. Hiſtorical facts are added, to evince the grant, of what expediency ſeemed to require, therefore we find it reaſonable to give credit to the relations made by the chriſtian fathers.

There remains one queſtion, that may ariſe from what has been ſaid on the argument of expediency, with a remark upon which, and an inference from it, I ſhall conclude this diſcourſe. The queſtion is this: a great part of mankind ſtill continues involved in darkneſs: are not miracles therefore ſtill expedient for their converſion to chriſtianity? We anſwer, they *may be ſo*, when it ſhall be God's appointed time to convert them. The all-wiſe Being may confer his graces and illuminations, at what periods, and upon what people he pleaſes. He may convert the remaining part of the world

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by other evidence, or by inſtances of power different from any that have been yet diſplayed. For we cannot carry our argument for the expediency of miracles ſo far, as merely from thence to infer the certainty of their exiſtence in any age, without teſtimony. But when facts *are* well atteſted by good and credible hiſtorians, then to be able to point out the expediency of thoſe facts to ſome good, univerſal end, is a cogent argument of their credibility. We have no well atteſted facts of this kind at preſent, from *unconverted* countries, and in *chriſtian* nations they are inexpedient, therefore we believe that the powers themſelves are intermitted.

If chriſtians are only a ſmall part of mankind in reſpect to the whole, we know that this is not the only inſtance, in which God hath choſen to himſelf a peculiar people, out of the whole race of mankind. The *Jews* were a long continued inſtance of his ſupernatural protection, and frequent interpoſition: and if the *Jews* were caſt out, it was for their unworthineſs; if many *Gentiles* are yet unconverted, it may ariſe from their own obſtinacy. For there are few parts of the world perhaps, in which chriſtianity hath not been once offered. We

cannot ſay determinately, as to the eaſtern parts at leaſt, how far their own wickedneſs or miſconduct may have contributed to the removal of the goſpel from them. *This* we know, that the *ſeven candleſticks* were removed from the *ſeven churches:* and we know, that the light alſo hath been removed ſome time from that city, which is now the metropolis of *Turkey*.

But as we are not to aſk, why the goſpel was not revealed ſooner to mankind, or why men were not from the fall of *Adam* baptized chriſtians; ſo neither are we to aſk of God, why chriſtianity is not at this day extended further; any more than we are to enquire of him, why many parts of the globe, perhaps ſome of the richeſt, and moſt fruitful ſoils, are ſuffered by his providence, to remain yet unpeopled, or yet uncultivated, or yet entirely undiſcovered: or, than we are to aſk, why he did not by an immediate act of his power, convert all mankind to chriſtianity at once, either at the birth, or crucifixion of Chriſt. In ſhort, ſomething was to be accompliſhed, ſome preceding ſteps were to be taken by the *divine* agency; ſomething was to be left to *human* agency; ſomething to be performed by the virtue, and ſincerity of men. For the great author of our religion, himſelf ſaith, *whoſoever*

ſoever ſhall not receive the kingdom of God, or the belief of chriſtianity, *as a little child*; i. e. with the ingenuous ſimplicity, and unprejudiced ſincerity of a little child; *he ſhall not enter therein.*[r] We learn from ſcripture, that in due time the *fulneſs of the gentiles ſhall come in: and all Iſrael ſhall be ſaved:*[s] i. e. according to the ſacred language of the holy ſcriptures, both *Jews*, and *Gentiles* ſhall be converted to the chriſtian faith. Preparations and openings may be now making for this grand event, as there were many ages before the diſpenſation of the goſpel to mankind. Miracles may again revive; or *other* evidence may ſucceed in their room. From what has been already done, we may conclude, that *all* the divine prophecies ſhall be compleated. But let us remember that *a thouſand years are with the Lord as one day, and one day as a thouſand years.*[t] The preſent age may hereafter be eſteemed but the childhood of chriſtianity, in compariſon of its future progreſs, as the three firſt centuries are by *us* ſtiled its infancy. Let us remember that without *ſome* evidence at leaſt of divine interpoſition in thoſe ages, chriſtianity might have been cruſhed in its tender years,

[r] Mark x. 15. [s] Rom xi. 25, 26. [t] 2 Peter iii. 8.

never have taken any root in the world at all, but have been utterly extinct almoſt as ſoon as it appeared. But it was God's will to eſtabliſh a church upon earth, and conſequently it was his pleaſure to grant all neceſſary aids to promote the eſtabliſhment. Why it is not extended further, is beyond the juſt limits of human enquiry: we have no right to call in queſtion the meaſures of his providence. *For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counſellor? His judgments* (we are told) *are paſt our finding out;*[u] *though in ſome inſtances of power, his footſteps* have *been known.*[w]

However, from a foregoing remark one ſerious inference ariſes to ourſelves. The *candleſtick* hath been removed from the ſeven churches: let us take heed, that for our unworthineſs it be not alſo moved from *us:* let us take heed that *the kingdom be not taken from* us, *and given to a nation that ſhall bring forth the fruits thereof:*[x] ever cautious leſt by our evil conduct under the advantages of divine light, *we give occaſion to the enemies of the Lord to blaſpheme;*[y] to reproach the privileges which we enjoy in Chriſt Jeſus: ever ſtudious that by the ſincerity of our

[u] Rom. xi. 33, 34.
[w] Pſ. lxxvii. 19.
[x] Matt. xxi. 43.
[y] 2 Sam. xii. 14.

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profeſſion, and conſequent holineſs of our lives, *we may adorn*, and recommend to the nations yet unconverted, *the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.*[z] *This* if we do, we need not fear, but that God will preſerve his religion and church among us ſecure as to any dangers, that may ariſe, from the deſigning favours, or undiſguiſed aſſaults of its enemies: *from the peſtilence that walketh in darkneſs; and from the ſickneſs that deſtroyeth at the noon-day.*[a]

[z] Titus II. 10. [a] Pſ. XCI. 6.

DISCOURSE V.

The Moſaick Hiſtory of the Fall conſidered.——Preached before the Univerſity of *Oxford*, *June* 29th, 1750.

PART I.

2 Cor. XI. 3.

——*Leſt by any means, as the Serpent beguiled* Eve, *through his Subtilty, ſo your Minds ſhould be corrupted from the Simplicity that is in Chriſt.*

THE apoſtle in theſe words plainly alludes to the *Moſaick* hiſtory of the fall. The perſons or things compared in the alluſion, are *Eve*, and the *chriſtian converts*; the *ſerpent*, and the *falſe teachers*, that had inſinuated themſelves among the *Corinthians*. This compariſon therefore naturally refers us back

back to the hiſtory of the deluſion accompliſhed by the ſerpent.

A late writer, guided by a confirmed opinion of his own ſingular ſagacity, and ſuperior judgment in divine matters, thinks he has diſcovered, that this hiſtory is nothing but a mere moral fable; conſequently the perſonages introduced are not *real*, but *imaginary*. Whether this can with any probability be the caſe, I ſhall beg leave to make the ſubject of our preſent inquiry.

Now in order fully to underſtand any writing, the firſt rule is, to learn, as far as poſſible, the intention of the writer. The manifeſt deſign of *Moſes*, in the firſt chapters of his inſpired book, was to give an account of the origin of the world, the formation of man, and his defection from original righteouſneſs. Since it is plain, that man could not come *corrupt* out of the hands of an allwiſe, and good being.

The image of himſelf, which, among the other works of his creation, God at firſt pronounced to be very good, could not have been ſent forth tainted with that depravity of vicious habits, and that violent propenſity to wicked deſires, which now gives ſo prevailing a tincture to the human complexion.

It

It had, no doubt, been obſerved, as far as hiſtory could trace back, that vice was almoſt coæval with the world itſelf. The firſt deſcendant of *Adam* is recorded as a murderer; and *the wickedneſs of man became great upon the earth.*[a] The original introduction of this moral evil was a ſubject, of which ſome account was wanted: it was a ſubject which, no doubt, had puzzled many ſpeculative inquirers in that generation; as in the ſucceeding ages, it has perplexed many, who have not been ſatisfied, or acquainted with the *Moſaick* narration. What allurement could be a counterbalance to that original purity of nature, with which man came into the world? What could ſeduce him from duty, and corrupt him? was the queſtion.

And what now was the writer to do in this caſe? Would an apologue or moral fable be an anſwer adequate to the inquiry? Speculative truths, or maxims *may*, and *have* often been delivered in this way; much friendly reproof, and inſtruction has been conveyed through this channel to prejudiced ears. But the buſineſs of the writer here was to relate a fact; to give a ſatisfactory account of the origin of a *real* evil ſtill ſubſiſting. Men were

[a] Gen. vi. 5.

to

to be acquainted *how*, and by *what perſons*, ſin was introduced.

The fable, as our [b] author informs us, conveys the following truths; "that man "had deviated from the law of his nature," or in other words, was a ſinner: but this was no more, than he knew before: conſcience no doubt had taught him this melancholy truth: "that by giving himſelf up to "the rule of his luſts and appetites, he had "debaſed the dignity of his nature:" this alſo he muſt have known before: Reflexion, and the law of God written in his mind, would have ſuggeſted this truth to him: "that the natural effects of ſin and guilt are "ſeen, in depriving man of his happineſs, in "plunging him into miſery, ſorrow, and "death." Experience would mournfully teach him *this*. But the queſtion ſtill was, *how* he was firſt betrayed, and corrupted, and ſubjected to death? *What* was the temptation? And *what* the offence? *Moſes* undertakes to inform us in this point. The next queſtion then is, Why his account is not to be credited as a *real hiſtorical* narration? The ſucceeding inſpired writers allude to it as ſuch: chriſtians of all ages have admitted it

[b] Vid. pag. 133—136. of the Examination, &c.

as

as ſuch: neither Chriſt, nor his apoſtles, have ſaid any thing to obviate this interpretation: let our author produce his objections; and let theſe contrary tenets be weighed in the balance together.

For another acknowledged rule of interpretation is, to compare ſcripture with ſcripture; and to explain one paſſage by another. Divine inſpiration cannot contradict itſelf, any more than infinite wiſdom can at any time deceive, or be deceived. If then we are neceſſarily led to conſider the *Moſaick* relation of the fall, and the manner in which it was accompliſhed, as a *real hiſtorical* narration in *one* part of holy writ; we muſt conclude that it is ſo to be underſtood in *every other* paſſage.

In my further proſecution therefore of this ſubject, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew,

Firſt, that St. *Paul* alludes to the *Moſaick* hiſtory of the fall in general, by the diſobedience of *Adam*, as a *real* fact.

Secondly, that he alludes likewiſe to the ſame account of the particular manner, and circumſtance of the fall, accompliſhed by the temptation of the ſerpent, as a *real* fact.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, I ſhall endeavour to anſwer ſome objections made, by our author, againſt the literal interpretation of this account: and then conclude,

Fourthly and *laſtly*, with a remark, or two, ſeaſonable to ourſelves, at the preſent Juncture.

The two firſt of theſe heads will afford ſufficient matter for the ſubject of our preſent diſcourſe.

Firſt, then I am to ſhew, that St. *Paul* alludes to the *Moſaick* hiſtory of the fall in general, by the diſobedience of *Adam*, as a *real* fact.

The apoſtle, in the fifth chapter of his epiſtle to the *Romans*, draws a contraſt between the conſequences of *Adam*'s tranſgreſſion, and the obedience of Chriſt. *As by the* offence *of* one, ſaith he, not offences, *judgment came upon all men unto condemnation; even ſo by the righteouſneſs of* one, *the free gift came upon all men unto Juſtification of life. For as by* one *man's diſobedience many were made ſinners, ſo by the obedience of* one *ſhall many be made righteous.*[c]

[c] Rom. v. 18, 19.

I would

I would here beg leave to aſk our author, whether the perſons in this contraſt, are *real*, or *imaginary*? If they are *real*, then here is a plain alluſion to a certain fact, to a certain offence, and that, the offence of *one* man: for the apoſtle ſpeaks all along in the ſingular number, and indeed the force of his reaſoning depends on this, in magnifying the free grace of God, and the redemption by grace in Chriſt. The tranſgreſſor pointed at, in the former part of the contraſt, is plainly *Adam*: and it appears from this, and other paſſages, that St. *Paul* had in his view the *Moſaick* account of *Adam*'s tranſgreſſion, and *its* conſequences; as he had likewiſe in the other part of the contraſt, the obedience of Chriſt, and *its* conſequences. He muſt therefore acknowledge the hiſtory of the tranſgreſſion to be a real fact; as he believed the redemption likewiſe to be *real*. Otherwiſe both parts of the contraſt would not be equal: conſequently nothing of any importance could be inferred from one, to the other. But let both be real, and the apoſtle's reaſoning will be of weight: the grace of God will be illuſtrated: and the expediency of the goſpel diſpenſation proved. *Death*, ſaith he, *reigned from* Adam *to* Moſes, *even over them, that had not ſinned after the ſimilitude of* Adam's

tranſgreſſion. Here is a plain alluſion to ſome *particular* tranſgreſſion. *But not as the* offence, (we ſee the word is ſingular, alluding to the *one* offence of *Adam*, recorded by *Moſes*, not plural, *offences*, or *corruption in general*, which our modern author would have to be the meaning of the fable:) *not as the offence*, ſaith he, *ſo alſo is the free gift. For if through the offence of* one, *many be dead; much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by* one *man, Jeſus Chriſt, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that ſinned, ſo is the gift: for the judgment was by* one *to condemnation:* i. e. by *one* offence a judgment, or a ſentence of condemnation came upon all men: *but the free gift is of many offences unto juſtification:*[d] i. e. notwithſtanding a great number of offences, many ſincerely faithful, and penitent perſons ſhall be juſtified by the free favour and grace of God. *For if by* one *man's offence, death reigned by* one: *much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteouſneſs ſhall reign by* one, *Jeſus Chriſt.*

If our author ſhall boldly declare himſelf at once, and ſay that both parts of the con-

[d] Rom. v. 14, 15, 16.

traſt

traſt are imaginary; then the apoſtle's argumentation is trifling, and of no uſe: he is only arguing from one apologue, or moral fable to another: nothing is proved in favour of chriſtianity: and we may drop this part of the epiſtle to the *Romans* at once, without ſuffering any real loſs.

If he maintains, that only one part of the contraſt is imaginary, the other real; we may aſk him, *which* is ſo? And by what criterion are we to diſtinguiſh the one from the other? Upon this ſuppoſition, how is the pertinency of the apoſtle's reaſoning to be ſupported? He has undertaken to prove to the *Romans* the benefit of the goſpel diſpenſation, and the expediency of faith in Chriſt. By what medium is he to prove this? Why, by a thing which never happened: by an alluſion to a mere apologue, or moral fable: by the effects of a certain tranſgreſſion, which was recorded indeed by one *Moſes*; but never committed: being purely fabulous; like any of the fables of *Æſop*. Such is the force of reaſoning, with which our author would ſupply an inſpired apoſtle of Chriſt! And for which, the cauſe of chriſtianity, no doubt, is much obliged to him!

But further, St. *Paul* in the fifteenth chapter of his firſt epiſtle to the *Corinthians* carries

on the ſame contraſt. *Since by man came death*, ſaith he, *by man came alſo the reſurrection of the dead. For as in* Adam *all die, even ſo in Chriſt ſhall all be made alive.*[e] Here is ſomething plainly expreſſed to be recovered by Chriſt, which was loſt by *Adam*. Life was the advantage regained; life therefore muſt have been the forfeiture made. So far is agreeable to the *Moſaick* hiſtory: where we find a forfeiture of life to have been the penalty laid on diſobedience: *in the day that thou eateſt thereof, thou ſhalt ſurely die.*[f] But this hiſtory is merely fabulous! The tranſgreſſion is a mere fable! Conſequently the penalty inflicted on the tranſgreſſion is a mere fable alſo! For where no tranſgreſſion is, there can be no puniſhment. Nothing was forfeited by the *firſt Adam*: nothing therefore was to be recovered, in conſequence of that forfeiture, by the *ſecond*: the apoſtle has all along been miſtaken: he has argued from a fact which never happened: and therefore, as far as concerns the apoſtle's argumentation, at leaſt, (pardon the blaſphemy of the expreſſion!) ſo far *Chriſt is dead in vain*.

[e] 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22. [f] Gen. ii. 17.

I pro-

I proceed now to the

Second thing propoſed, which was to ſhew, that St. *Paul* alludes to the *Moſaick* account, of the *particular manner* and circumſtance of the fall, accompliſhed by the temptation of the ſerpent, as a *real* fact.

The expreſſion in the text is an inſtance of this kind. *I fear*, ſaith the apoſtle, *leſt by any means, as the ſerpent beguiled* Eve, *through his ſubtilty, ſo your minds ſhould be corrupted from the ſimplicity that is in Chriſt*.[s] But our author has made a new diſcovery: the ſerpent never *tempted* Eve; and conſequently could not *beguile* her. The *Moſaick* account of the fall could be no reaſonable ground of fear, or ſolicitude: and therefore he might very well have ſpared the alluſion: he conceived fear, *where no fear was*.

But let us conſider a little the connexion of the paſſage: the apoſtle in this, and the foregoing chapter, is endeavouring to ſhew the little reaſon, that the falſe teachers, who had inſinuated themſelves among the *Corinthians*, had to glory in any particular privilege over him, or to prefer themſelves on any account before him: *being jealous over his converts with a jealouſy*, which was for God.

[s] 2 Cor. xi. 3.

He tells them that he had fitted and prepared them for *one huſband only*; *that he might preſent them, as a chaſte virgin unto Chriſt.*[b] But *he feared, leſt as the ſerpent beguiled* Eve *through his ſubtilty, ſo their minds ſhould be corrupted from that ſimplicity*, or ſingleneſs, *which was* due *to Chriſt.* What then was the ground of his fear in this place? Why, leſt theſe falſe teachers ſhould have the ſame evil influence upon *their* hearts and affections, that the ſerpent had once experimentally upon *Eve.* But let us ſtrike out the reality of this temptation, and then ſee what ſenſe our author will make for the apoſtle in this paſſage. *For I have* prepared *you for one huſband, that I may preſent you as a chaſte virgin to Chriſt. But I fear, leſt by any means, as the ſerpent,* who was really *no ſerpent*, no *real external* agent, but a mere *imaginary* being, *tempted* Eve, *ſo your minds ſhould be corrupted* by the falſe teachers, that are among you, *from the ſimplicity, that is in Chriſt.* If our author ſhall ſay, that theſe falſe teachers are correſpondent to the evil luſts, that corrupted *Eve*, then it will follow, that *Eve* was poſſeſſed of theſe evil luſts, before ſhe was beguiled by them: i. e. in other words ſhe was corrupt,

[b] 2 Cor. xi. 2.

before

before ſhe was corrupted. For our Saviour, in the [i] fifth chapter of St. *Matthew*'s goſpel determines *luſt*, or evil deſire, to be of the nature of Sin, even before it proceeds into action. In the beſt ſenſe that can be made of this paſſage, according to the principles of our author, the compariſon lies between the falſe teachers among the *Corinthians*, and the luſts that beguiled *Eve:* between *external* ſeducers, and *internal* paſſions: between which there ſeems to be no juſt, and equal compariſon, even if we could ſuppoſe *Eve* to have retained ſinful luſts, before ſhe was corrupt. For even upon this ſuppoſition, the *Corinthians* were poſſeſſed of inward luſts, and ſenſual appetites, which might betray them, as well as *Eve*. Conſequently the terms of the compariſon ſhould lie between the *inward* affections of the *one*, and thoſe of the *other:* between the *external* tempters of the one, and the *external* ſeducer of the other: and not between things of ſo different a nature; between *external* tempters, and *internal* paſſions.

But further, in another epiſtle, the ſame apoſtle gives a reaſon for the authority of the man over the woman, plainly founded on the *Moſaick* account of the particular manner, and

[i] Matth. v. 28.

immediate occaſion of the fall. Namely the impoſition paſt by the ſerpent upon *Eve:* that *ſhe* only was *perſonally* deceived by the ſerpent, and was *firſt* in the tranſgreſſion. *And* Adam, ſaith he, *was not deceived*, i. e. *perſonally* tempted and deluded by the ſerpent: *but the woman being deceived* by him, *was in the tranſgreſſion*;[k] i. e. was *firſt* in the tranſgreſſion. The apoſtle here founds his right of ſuperiority either upon ſomething or nothing. His firſt principle is plainly built upon ſomething *real*, namely the priority of creation, according to the *Moſaick* order of creation. *For* Adam, ſaith the apoſtle, *was firſt formed, then* Eve.[l] Here the alluſion is to a real fact, acknowledged, and aſſigned as a reaſon, by our author. Why ſhould his ſecond principle, immediately ſubjoined, be merely imaginary, founded only on an apologue, or moral fable; and the verity of the *Moſaick* hiſtory be diminiſhed? Can a fable be any juſt principle or foundation of authority? Though it may perhaps be as reaſonable, as one which our author has aſſigned; which he in a kind of magiſterial manner prefers to any [m] "title, that either "*Moſes* or the *apoſtles* could give;" which yet would be as dangerous, if admitted in politicks, as it would be deſtructive to ſociety;

[k] 1 Tim. II. 14. [l] 1 Tim. II. 13. [m] Pag. 188.

which

which would equally give a right of dominion to lions and tygers over man, namely a "ſuperiority of force and bodily ſtrength." For he contends, "that ſuperiority of force, "and bodily ſtrength neceſſarily conveys a "ſuperiority of power to the ſtronger over "the weaker." Where, if by ſuperiority of power, he means a ſuperior ability to *compel*, in which ſenſe alone his profeſſion is true; then all that it implies, reverts to this, that ſuperiority of force conveys a ſuperiority of force. But if by conveying power, he means a right to authority and dominion, then his propoſition will be denied by every ſerious maſter of ethicks, politicks, or ſound reaſoning, as well as by every true friend to the peace, and eſtabliſhment of human ſociety.

To the authority of St. *Paul* we may now add that of St. *John*, who ſpeaking of ſatan, in the twelfth chapter of his revelation, ſaith, *and the great dragon was caſt out, that old ſerpent, which deceiveth the whole earth.*[a] Where it is probable, from the name given to ſatan of *that* old ſerpent, *that deceiveth the whole earth*, (though we need not reſt upon this) that the inſpired writer had in his view the primary deception of the firſt

[a] Rev. xii. 9.

parent

parent of mankind by the agency of the ſerpent. However, after theſe ſeveral remarks, a queſtion may be here aſked, not immaterial to our purpoſe in this place, namely, why all theſe alluſions were made by the ſpirit of truth, to this hiſtory, as a *real* fact, and no intimation given, that it was *fabulous*, in an age when the hiſtory was received as a fact, and when ſome ſuch ſuggeſtion might have been expected? If the hiſtory had been fabulous, it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that ſome one of the inſpired writers, would have intimated thus much, in order to prevent any evil conſequences, that might ariſe from a miſtake in the interpretation. At leaſt, it is not reaſonable to imagine, that they would thus have unanimouſly argued from it, as a fact, if it had been no more than a moral apologue. But an hiſtory ſo univerſally received, and for the moſt part ſimilarly underſtood, through ſo many hundred, nay I may ſay thouſand years, has ſurely a fair right to withſtand any private expoſitions, or objections made to it by a modern interpreter. This would lead me, in the

Third place, to anſwer ſome objections, made by our author, againſt the literal interpretation of the *Moſaick* hiſtory of the fall.

But

But fully to diſcharge this, would, I fear, exceed the uſual limits of one diſcourſe. I ſhall therefore at preſent only beg your patience whilſt I make a remark, or two, preparatory to the introduction of thoſe objections, and ſo conclude.

It has uſually been ſuppoſed then, that the devil made uſe of the ſerpent, as his inſtrument, to tempt, and delude *Eve*. There can be no doubt therefore, but that, as far as he was permitted, he would furniſh this miniſter with ſuch powers, as were requiſite, for the accompliſhment of his deſign. That inviſible beings have a power of agency in this lower world, cannot be denied by any one, who acknowledges the ſcriptures to be the inſpired word of God. If it ſhould be aſked, "why "ſatan *was* permitted to tempt *Eve* at all?" We may reply to this, by another queſtion, why is one wicked man permitted to tempt his neighbour, and draw him into ſin? Why is the moſt vicious and deſigning part of mankind permitted to impoſe on the ſimplicity of the moſt virtuous? There are but too many tempters every day in the world, whether by their converſations, by their examples, or by their writings: and the moſt innocent, and unexperienced in the wiles of the tempter, are oftentimes the moſt liable to be ſeduced.

Yet

Yet the permiſſion of theſe trials in the moral world, are made no juſt objection to the attributes of God, or the diſpenſations of his providence.

In ſhort, it appears from the very nature of man, and the conſtitution of things, that he was intended to undergo a probation. Angels alſo, a ſuperior order of intellectual beings, underwent ſuch a trial, before him; and *ſome* fell. Man was created a free-agent, capable of chuſing good, or evil; and virtue was to be his choice, in order to his being intitled to the reward of virtue. As he was a probationary being, a poſitive teſt was ſet before him of his obedience to the will of his creator. This teſt was a prohibition to eat of a certain tree in the garden, called *the tree of knowledge of good and evil.*[o]

As this prohibition was a law of his creator, the violation of it muſt neceſſarily incur his diſpleaſure. A temptation therefore muſt be neceſſary to allure man from duty, and be an overbalance to the danger of forfeiting the divine favour. But by what being was this temptation to be offered? There were but two perſons of the human ſpecies yet in the world, and they yet perfect, and uncorrupt,

[o] Gen. ii. 17.

and

and ſincerely affectionate towards each other. *They* would not therefore try to ſeduce each other: the tempter conſequently could not be one of the human ſpecies: a ſuperior good being would not undertake ſo malicious an office: a mere brute could not diſcharge it. What then could remain, but an inviſible evil being, already corrupt, and willing to draw others into his own miſerable ſociety of corruption. God might permit this being to try his new created moral agents: and ſuch a being, we may infer from the deſcription given of him in ſcripture, would rejoice in the office.

But as man's rational powers were ſtrong, the temptation muſt be proportionably great: an [p] increaſe of knowledge reſembling the divine, would be a very tempting allurement. We read alſo that *the tree was pleaſant to the eye:* or as the original Hebrew very emphatically expreſſes it, *a deſire to the eyes.*[q] Here then would be a tempting allurement offered to the *ſenſual* appetite, as well as to the *in-*

[p] The very learned and ingenious Dr. Rutherforth would here interpret the meaning to be, a new diſcovery of their natural independency: but ſtill the argument, concerning the force of the temptation, will revert to the ſame; as this new diſcovery would be a very agreeable point of additional knowledge. See Dr. Rutherforth's defence of the lord biſhop of London's diſcourſes. Pag. 139.

[q] תאוה לעינים

telle&tual.

tellectual. An agreeable object to the ſight, a flattering allurement to the underſtanding. The evil being, ever watchful for the deſtruction of man, perceived this, and immediately ſet himſelf to the work of temptation. He applies himſelf to that party, which by its native tenderneſs and pliableneſs, he ſaw moſt likely to be miſled; and by its native amiableneſs and perſuaſive talents, when once depraved, moſt likely to ſeduce the other. The temptation accordingly was but too effectual: the malicious tempter ſucceeded in his deſign: *the woman took of the fruit, and did eat; and gave alſo unto her huſband with her, and he did eat.*[r] They gratified at once both the ſenſual and intellectual deſire. Thus man became *knowing* to his ſorrow. He knew natural, and moral evil both together.

What is there now in all this, that is inconſiſtent, either with the ſubtilty of the tempter; the nature of a rational free agent, who was to be tried; or the attributes of God, who created him probationary? [s] How do theſe "principles exclude or throw aſide "the natural law or reaſon of man, as of no "uſe or ſervice to him, from the beginning "of the world to this day?" And what be-

[r] Gen. iii. 6.

[s] Pag. 148.

comes

comes of our author's queſtion, [1] "how can "we imagine that God would expoſe their "ſimplicity unarmed, and uninſtructed, to "the aſſaults of an inſidious tempter, ſo "greatly ſuperior to them both in craft and "power?" For who ſays, that it was thus entirely *unarmed*, and *uninſtructed*? Had not man the armour of reaſon, and the fence of a divine prohibition to guard him from the ſin into which he fell? The anſwer to this queſtion is plain and obvious: man was a moral agent, capable of trial; capable of adhering to the law of his creator: he had *rational* powers, at leaſt, to inſtruct him in his duty; a *poſitive* law, to guard him in it: the conſequence of breaking the law was denounced; a grievous ſanction! No leſs than death! Where then was the injuſtice of permitting him to be tried, that a voluntary agent might prove to other intellectual beings of God's creation, that he had made virtue his choice, and conſequently demonſtrate his title, through the conditional favour of his creator, to the rewards of virtue?

But however, we chriſtians, of all others, have leaſt reaſon to complain, if we conſider, that what was forfeited by the effect of the

[1] Pag. 106.

temptation

temptation upon *Adam*, has been amply recovered to *us*, by the obedience of *Chriſt*: that provided we attend to the voice of our creator, ſpeaking in the ſuggeſtions of reaſon, and the expreſs dictates of revelation, notwithſtanding the preſent infirmities of our nature, and the allurements of the buſy tempter, ſtill permitted to be exerciſed upon us, yet we may in the end, be even *more than conquerors, through him*,[n] who ſtrengtheneth *us*. We have this comfort, ([w] how much ſoever it may be ridiculed by our author) yet certainly a reaſonable comfort, amidſt the natural evils of life, introduced by moral evil, that through the free, undeſerved favour, and grace of God, when our probation is over, and compleated in virtue, we ſhall one day be placed as much above the danger of any future fall, as we ſhall be above all poſſibility of any future infection from vice. Sufficient ſatisfaction have we to reflect, that we are ſtill in the hands of a gracious God, that all equitable allowances will be made for our weakneſs; continual mediations and interceſſions for our failings, by the one great mediator between *God* and *us*. We are aſſured likewiſe, that our reward will be pro-

[n] Rom. viii. 37. [w] Pag. 195—6.

portioned

portioned to the difficulties of our chriſtian trial: *for in our father's houſe are many manſions.*[x] Where then is the injury, if by the very nature of our probation, and the difficulties attending it, we have an opportunity offered us of attaining a more *glorious*, and *honourable* prize, in the great day of rewards? And though we cannot, in this corrupted ſtate of things, obtain an abſolute aſcendancy over the depraved inclinations of our nature; or over *the principalities or powers with which we wreſtle*,[y] yet big with conſolation, and greatly enlivening is the hope, *that this corruptible ſhall* one day *put on incorruption*, when *that ſeed of the woman*, which was glorioufly demonſtrated to be the Son of God with power, who was revealed *to bruiſe the head of the ſerpent*,[z] and to redeem us from the dire effects of the fall, ſhall come again to reward all his faithful ſervants, in his kingdom.

[x] John xiv. 2. [y] Eph. vi. 12. [z] Gen. iii. 15.

DISCOURSE V.

The Moſaick Hiſtory of the Fall conſidered.——Preached before the Univerſity of *Oxford*, *July* 1ſt, 1750.

PART II.

2 Cor. XI. 3.

——*Leſt by any means, as the Serpent beguiled* Eve, *through his Subtilty, ſo your Minds ſhould be corrupted from the Simplicity that is in Chriſt.*

THIS is one of thoſe inſtances, wherein the inſpired writers allude to the *Moſaick* hiſtory of the fall. A modern writer would reduce the credit of this hiſtory into that of a mere apologue or moral fable, where the characters are not *real*, but *imaginary*: conſequently the importance of many doc-

trines in the ſacred ſcriptures, dependent upon the real verity of this hiſtory, muſt ſink of courſe. But it has been an allowed rule of the beſt maſters of reaſon, as well as the moſt learned and ingenuous chriſtians, to interpret ſcripture by itſelf: parallel paſſages by each other: that is, the word of infinite truth, by the word of infinite truth.

In my former diſcourſe therefore upon this ſubject, I propoſed,

Firſt, to ſhew that St. *Paul* alludes to the *Moſaick* hiſtory of the fall in general, by the diſobedience of *Adam*, as a *real* fact.

Secondly, that he alludes likewiſe to the ſame account of the particular manner, and circumſtance of the fall, by the temptation of the ſerpent, as a *real* fact.

Thirdly, to anſwer ſome objections made, by our author, againſt the literal interpretation of this account: and then,

Fourthly, to conclude with a remark, or two, ſeaſonable to ourſelves, at the preſent juncture.

The argument urged under my *firſt* head was this; the apoſtle in his epiſtle to the *Romans*,

Romans, and likewiſe in one to the *Corinthians*, ſuppoſes ſomething to have been recovered by *Chriſt*, which was forfeited by *Adam*. If then the *recovery* was *real*, the *forfeiture* was alſo *real*: if the *forfeiture* was real, the *tranſgreſſion* by which it was made, was alſo ſuch. Moreover, the tranſgreſſion was *ſingle*, for it is all along expreſſed in the *ſingular* number: *by the offence of* one, (explained before to be *Adam*,) *many were made ſinners*. The apoſtle's reaſoning alſo depends in one place upon this ſuppoſition, that the offence was *ſingle*: for, he draws a compariſon between the conſequences of that *one* offence of *Adam*, and thoſe of the *univerſal* righteouſneſs of *Chriſt*.

The argument of the *ſecond* head was this: St. *Paul* alludes to ſome particular paſſages in the *Moſaick* account of the fall: from which alluſions we may conclude, that he ſuppoſed it to have been a *real* fact. Particularly the ſuperiority of the man over the woman is partly founded on this hiſtorical truth, that it was *Eve* who firſt tranſgreſſed: that it was *Eve* who was firſt ſeduced by the ſerpent. But if the *Moſaick* account had been a fable; no ſolid principle could have been laid down from a thing not real in fact, as any foundation or convincing reaſon of ſuperiority. The

apoſtle's argument would have been as fanciful and groundleſs, as our author would have the *Moſaick* hiſtory reputed.

The remarks already offered previous to my *third* head, chiefly reſpect man, as a *moral* agent, capable of undergoing a trial: a *probationary* agent, deſigned for trial; that he might make virtue his choice, in order to be intitled to the fuller rewards of virtue. From whence it follows, that it was by no means more inconſiſtent, in the time of *Adam*, than it is at preſent, with any of the attributes of the Deity, to permit ſuch a being to be tried: tempted, in order to be tried: furniſhed at the ſame time with rational powers to withſtand the temptation: guarded with a poſitive law to oppoſe againſt it.

But the queſtion is, by what being was the temptation to be offered, when there were yet but two of the human ſpecies created; and *they* yet perfect, and uncorrupt? They would not therefore try to corrupt each other. A ſuperior good angel would not undertake ſo invidious an office. An inferior being, whoſe organs are guided merely by inſtinct to ſelf-preſervation, and the continuance of its own ſpecies, unaſſiſted, could not attempt it. The difficulty is ſolved, if, as we are led by concurrent ſcripture, to which reaſon is not repugnant,

repugnant, we ſuppoſe it to have been accompliſhed by the moſt inſidiouſly ſubtle of all the beaſts in the field, conſidered as the inſtrument; actuated, and aſſiſted, by a ſuperior, malicious, inviſible being, ever-watchful for the deſtruction of man, as the firſt mover in the deluſion.

Thus far our ſubject hath already led us; I proceed now as was propoſed in the *third* place, to anſwer ſome objections made to this doctrine.

The ſagacious author then has diſcovered an impoſſibility in the caſe; conſequently an abſurdity in reaſon: [a] "the ſtory of a *talking* "*ſerpent* can be nothing elſe but a fable." If we argue from the ordinary powers of nature, as they ſubſiſt at preſent, we may agree with him. But this is what his adverſaries never yet ſuppoſed: he is hitherto fighting with a ſerpent of his own production; and may therefore treat him, as the hero in the fable did the army, which he himſelf had raiſed, from the teeth of the ſerpent, that he had ſown. But in his conteſts with chriſtians, let him ſhew the impoſſibility, that an inviſible evil ſpirit might actuate, and give an additional power to that creature, which he

[a] Pag. 164.

had choſen for the inſtrument of his impoſture. Is there any greater abſurdity in ſuppoſing that ſuch ſpirits ſhould operate upon *irrational*, than upon *rational* agents, whoſe bodily powers, and organs of ſtrength we find, in the records of ſcripture, increaſed by them, beyond the uſual limits of nature. Let him prove it impoſſible, that inviſible beings, of any kind, may have an influence upon animal bodies, and he will demonſtrate his point. Till then, let us reſt ſatisfied with what holy ſcripture, and the uſual interpretation of all antiquity, hath handed down to us. We do not ſuppoſe that it was a *mere* ſerpent that tempted *Eve:* and yet it might perplex our author to ſhew from any abſurdity in reaſon, that the ſerpent did not undergo ſome change in his nature, or in the poſture of his body; or that he was not deprived of ſome organs, which he enjoyed before, in conſequence of the ſentence paſſed upon him. The words, *upon thy belly ſhalt thou go, and duſt ſhalt thou eat all the days of thy life,*[b] might eaſily give room to ſuppoſe an induction of ſome new form, or poſture, which he had not before; as well as a change of food for the nouriſhment of his body; or elſe where was the

[b] Gen. iii. 14.

puniſh-

puniſhment, if nothing new enſued upon the ſentence? I ſay ſuch a ſuppoſition might be formed, with as little ſtrength of imagination, as hath given ground to ſome direct, authoritative poſitions of our author. Not that I will venture to aſſert, that the ſerpent actually underwent any ſuch change: but it may puzzle our great maſter of nature, and reaſon, to demonſtrate the contrary.[c]

[c] A query may here be offered, although no great ſtreſs can be laid upon it, whether the fruit of the tree, forbidden to our firſt parents, might not have been originally the natural food of the ſerpent; whether this, among other reaſons, might not have ſuggeſted to ſatan the choice of the ſerpent, above any other beaſt of the field, for his inſtrument in tempting *Eve*; or at leaſt, whether the ſerpent might not have frequently eaten plentifully of this fruit in the ſight of *Eve*, have by this means excited her curioſity, prepared an opportunity of introducing the temptation, and thereby have contributed much to her deluſion, as well as by aſcribing extraordinary qualities to the fruit. The ſacred hiſtorian ſaith expreſsly, *and when the woman ſaw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleaſant to the eyes, and a tree to be deſired to make one wiſe; ſhe took of the fruit thereof, and did eat*, &c. Gen. 3. 6. Now *how* did *Eve* ſee *that the tree was good for food*, more naturally or probably, than by ſeeing the ſerpent eat freely thereof? *How* was ſhe ſatisfied that it was *deſirable to make one wiſe*, more probably, than by the inſinuations of the ſerpent, that by eating thereof, he had improved his own knowledge, above that of other beaſts, and acquired thoſe new faculties of ſpeech and reaſon which ſhe obſerved in him? Our great Engliſh poet however, beautifully, introduces the ſerpent tempting *Eve* by this argument, that by eating of the fruit of this tree, he had enlarged his own capacities, and "of brute became hu-"man." See Milton's Paradiſe Loſt, book 9. verſe 567, &c. Nor is there any thing abſurd, forced, or unnatural in the imagination. It ſeems to add a peculiar ſtrength to the ſentence pronounced, and at the ſame time to give a reaſon for a part of it, that for this deception, he ſhould ſuffer a change in the nature

But our author thinks that he has diſcovered an inconſiſtency between the *Moſaick* account, and the writings of a learned prelate of our church, in his interpretation of that account. The inconſiſtency is this, [d] "that "while *Moſes* aſſigns the natural ſubtilty of "the ſerpent, as the ſole ground, and reaſon "of his ſucceſs in tempting *Eve*, the excel-"lent prelate on the contrary, alledges *that* "*very* ſubtilty with which ſhe was tempted, "as a proof that the ſerpent could not be the "tempter." But I would aſk, where does the ſacred hiſtorian mention the *natural ſubtilty* of the ſerpent, as the *ſole* ground and reaſon of his *ſucceſs* in tempting *Eve*? He begins his narration indeed with the ſubtilty of the ſerpent, but there is not a word of its being the *ſole cauſe* of his *ſucceſs*. His ſuperior ſubtilty, [e] if we take the words as they

nature of his food, that henceforth he ſhould be condemned to eat or ſwallow duſt all the days of his life. But whatever the tree might have been in itſelf, whatever the natural uſe of its fruit, or its relative uſe in reſpect to the ſerpent, it is certain, that to our firſt parents it was made a poſitive inſtituted teſt of their obedience, or voluntary diſobedience to their creator, and was occaſionally applied by their enemy to tempt them from duty.

[d] Pag. 164.

[e] The ingenious Dr. Rutherforth has given a different tranſlation of the text, which makes very good ſenſe; *and the ſerpent* became *ſubtile beyond any beaſt of the field, which the Lord God had made*, i. e. under the direction of the ſuperior inviſible, evil being, he *became* ſo. See Rutherforth, p. 159.——But I have here endeavoured to ſhew, that even if we adhere to our own tranſlation, our author's reaſoning will not hold good.

ſtand

ſtand in our tranſlation, might probably be the reaſon why the inviſible being thought him the moſt proper ſecondary agent in his deſigns: and for the ſame reaſon, it was firſt taken notice of in the beginning of the narration by *Moſes:* but it ſurely can be no reaſon, why he could not be made uſe of as an inſtrument of agency. It might qualify him for the proper exertion of ſuperior abilities; but ſurely could be no natural impediment to the extraordinary *endowment* with thoſe abilities.

But the ſerpent was puniſhed; therefore he muſt have been the ſole agent in promoting the tranſgreſſion. For our author intimates, [f] "that it would be inconſiſtent to affign the "whole puniſhment to *one* being, and yet "charge the whole crime to *another*." But where is the *whole* puniſhment aſſigned to *one* being, except in his *own* hypotheſis? The firſt part of the ſentence pronounced ſeems indeed to center in the ſerpent: [g] *thou art curſed above every beaſt of the field, upon thy belly ſhalt thou go, and duſt ſhalt thou eat all the days of thy life.* But the latter part of the ſentence certainly compriſes ſomething more under it, than that men ſhould be able ſome-

[f] Pag. 162. [g] Gen. iii. 14.

times

times to *bruiſe the head* of one of the ſpecies of ſerpents. For what greater mark of enmity, or puniſhment, is there in this, than man ſhews, and has an original grant to ſhew, every day, to the beaſts of the field who were to be his food? In the more comprehenſive ſenſe it hath been underſtood by the moſt learned theologiſts, both ancient, and modern: and agreeably to this ſenſe, St. *Paul* ſeems to apply the expreſs words of the ſentence directly to ſatan, in his conſolatory exhortation at the end of his epiſtle to the *Romans*, where he has treated fully of the conſequences of the fall of *Adam*; *and the God of peace*, ſaith he, *ſhall bruiſe ſatan under your feet ſhortly*.[h] Which words ſeem to bear an immediate alluſion to the original ſentence paſſed upon the tempter, *that his head ſhould be bruiſed* by the ſeed of the woman.

That the devil was the principal author, or introducer of death, and moral evil into the world, was the opinion of the ancient *Jewiſh* church, *to whom the oracles of God were committed*,[i] as appears from the book of wiſdom, *for God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of his own eternity. Never-*

[h] Rom. xvi. 20.

[i] Rom. iii. 2.

theleſs,

theleſs, through envy of the devil came death into the world, and they that do hold of his ſide do find it.[k]

Agreeably to this, that the whole race of men hath been deceived by him, is the expreſs aſſertion of St. *John*, where he ſtiles him, *the great dragon, that old ſerpent, that deceiveth the whole world.*[l] But from whence came the idea of a *ſerpent* affixed to ſatan? From whence the name of that *old dragon, that deceiveth the whole world?* but from the hiſtory of his deception of the firſt parents of mankind, under the appearance of a *ſerpent?* And his ſubſequent deceptions of mankind unto this day?

From theſe authorities we may aſcend to *one* which is ſtill higher than that of *John* the evangeliſt, or *Paul* the apoſtle, namely to that of the great Author and founder of our religion, who ſpeaking of ſatan, as it is recorded by St. *John*, ſaith, *he was a murderer from the beginning, when he ſpeaketh a lie, he ſpeaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.*[m] Now from whence is he called *a murderer from the beginning*, but from his deception of our firſt parents into mortality and death? From whence *a*

[k] Wiſd. II. 23, 24. [l] Rev. XII. 9. [m] John VIII. 44.

liar,

liar, and *the father of it*, but from his impoſition upon our firſt parent by a direct falſehood, in telling her, that the fruit of the forbidden tree would make them become as Gods? Theſe ſeveral paſſages, whatever force they may have, conſidered ſeparately, when collected and compared together ſeem to make it evident, that the devil inſtigated by malicious affections, under a borrowed ſhape, according to the *Moſaick* hiſtory, was the principal cauſe or agent in the introduction of deceit, of moral evil, guilt, and death.

The tempter, entered into the ſerpent, in order to become *ſenſible* to *ſenſitive* beings; but that the *ſerpent* ſhould have ſome ſentence paſſed upon him, might nevertheleſs be reaſonable to expect. He was the *inſtrument*, or *apparent* agent in promoting the tranſgreſſion. He was the *viſible* deceiver; whatever might have been the original *form* of the ſerpent; ſo we may ſuppoſe ſome *viſible* token of puniſhment might be inflicted on him, as a terror to future deceivers. That if God dealt thus with the beaſts of the field, we might argue, how is it to be expected that he will deal with rational creatures? But ſtill we may ſuppoſe the primary corrupter, or inviſible firſt mover, to be the greateſt ſharer in the puniſhment. What his ſpecific puniſh-

puniſhment was, we are ſo little acquainted with the world of ſpirits, that as *Moſes* thought not proper to inform us, it would be a vain curioſity for us to enquire. It has been ſuppoſed, and not without ſome foundation, as we have ſhewn, to be included in the denunciation, that *the ſeed of the woman ſhould bruiſe the ſerpent's head.*[a] But whatever it was, we may conclude, that as a viſible token of puniſhment was inflicted on the miſguided inſtrument, a much ſeverer penalty muſt have been intended, if not pronounced, againſt the *latent, guilty* firſt mover.

For ſuppoſe the curſe to have been denounced againſt the ſerpent only; yet how does this prove him to have been the ſole agent in the deluſion? The ſerpent viſibly ſuffered as having been the inſtrument of impoſture: yet how does this prove that no mark of divine juſtice was reſerved for the inviſible director, that actuated the ſerpent? Man is ſo little a judge of the immaterial world, that he might not have had any idea of the puniſhment, if it had been denounced; and therefore it might not have been revealed. The *viſible* agents were openly ſentenced: both the ſeducer, and the ſeduced, received

[a] Gen. iii. 15.

their

their puniſhment: *Adam*, and *Eve* were ſeduced: the ſerpent was the viſible ſeducer: both parties had their ſentence paſſed upon them: if there was an inviſible firſt mover in the deluſion, it would be ſufficient to ſuppoſe, that he was puniſhed according to his deſerts, though his puniſhment were as inviſible, as his agency had been.

But where do we find it related, or ſo much as intimated by *Moſes*, though confidently aſcribed to the ſacred hiſtorian by our author, [o] "that ſpeech was a faculty belonging "the nature of the ſerpent?" There is no ſuch text in the book of Geneſis. *Moſes* indeed ſays that the ſerpent ſpake to the woman; but he does not ſay, "that it was by "any faculty belonging to his nature," that the ſerpent ſpake.

In [p] another place, he is much ſurprized, that *Eve* ſhould not be ſhocked at the ſpeech of the ſerpent. But does *Moſes* undertake to relate every particular circumſtance that happened at the time of the temptation? In that caſe he might have compoſed a book as large as the poem of *Milton* upon that fact only. But how does it appear, that *Eve* was *not* ſurprized? The ſcripture does not ſay ſo:

[o] Pag. 161. [p] Pag. 105.

nay

nay probably her admiration at theſe extraordinary faculties of the ſerpent, might render her the more credulous to his ſpeech, and thereby in ſome meaſure contribute to her deluſion. But what is it to the real verity of the hiſtory, conſidered as a fact, whether ſhe was ſurprized or not?

But our author has found out an artful method to leſſen the weight and dignity of the ſacred hiſtorian, under the character of another writer. He cannot hurt him in his own armour; therefore he ſtrips him of *that*, and puts him on ſuch, as is not fit for him. Thus he ſubtilly introduces *Moſes* under the perſon of [q] *Sanconiatho*, and then contends againſt him, at an advantage, under the diſguiſe with which he has cloathed him. His readers are hereby unguardedly led to drop the notion of divine inſpiration: and when he thinks, that under the covert of a genteel introduction, and a proper maſk, the real character of an *inſpired* writer is forgotten, then he proceeds to examine with triumph, by what means the [r] hiſtorian could know the events repreſented in this book, if conſidered as an hiſtorical narration.

The learned [s] prelate, againſt whom he writes, had only deſired one indulgence,

[q] Pag. 118, &c. [r] Pag. 128.
[s] Biſhop of London's diſcourſes, 5th edit. Pag. 57, 58.

namely, " the ſame equity in interpreting " the ſenſe or words of *Moſes*, as one would " certainly uſe towards any other ancient " writing; for inſtance, *Sanconiatho*'s Phœ- " nician hiſtory." This thought our author preſently [t] improves into a ſuppoſition, which is not to be admitted; that *Moſes* had no fuller inſtructions, with regard to the ſubject matter of his hiſtory, than *Sanconiatho* could have had, if he had undertaken the ſame hiſtory. This, I ſay, is not to be ſuppoſed from the learned prelate's argument: for ſurely there is a great deal of difference, between a liberty of interpreting an hiſtorian, and the qualifications of that hiſtorian to write. It is true indeed, which our author obſerves, [u] " that in this way of conſidering " the book of Geneſis, it was not poſſible " for any mortal to give an hiſtorical narra- " tion of the events therein repreſented; or " to deſcribe the particular manner, order, " and time in which, or the materials, out " of which, this world, and its principal " inhabitant, man, were formed. And we " ſhould apply preſently to ſuch a writer, " what was ſaid by God to *Job*, *where waſt* " *thou when I laid the foundations of the*

[t] Pag. 118, &c.

[u] Pag. 128.

" *earth?*

" *earth? declare if thou haſt underſtanding.*[w]
" And ſhould think the ſame of him, which
" *Job* confeſſeth of himſelf, *that he had ut-*
" *tered, what he underſtood not; things too*
" *wonderful for him, which he knew not.*[x]
" We ſhould at once conclude, that the
" whole, which the wiſeſt of men could
" write on ſuch a ſubject, muſt be the mere
" effect of fancy and invention, or an at-
" tempt to inculcate ſome moral truth, where
" phyſical truth was not to be had." Thus far our author:

But what is all this to the purpoſe; unleſs to perplex his reader, by the varied character? For does any perſon, except our author, ſuppoſe that *Moſes* wrote his hiſtory without any further ſupply of matter or inſtruction, than what was furniſhed by his own imagination; by the mere natural abilities of his own mind; or by tradition only? An hiſtorical account of theſe things could not be given by the mere natural power, or underſtanding of man: but what then? Are we therefore to ſet aſide the uſe of inſpiration in *Moſes?* Nay our author himſelf afterwards allows, " that *Moſes was* commiſſioned by " God to write this hiſtory." Conſequently

[w] Job xxxviii. 4. [x] Job xlii. 3.

he muſt allow him to be inveſted with powers and inſtructions adequate to the undertaking. And what then becomes of the [y] objector's inquiries, how the hiſtorian could know theſe things, if they are to be underſtood literally? How does he now prove, (what he aſſerts) [z] that a divine commiſſion makes no difference in the caſe? Is the caſe the ſame, with regard to the ability of relating a very early ante-diluvian fact, whether the hiſtorian is inſpired by God or not? By what arguments does he demonſtrate, that *Moſes* did not write by the inſpiration, if he wrote by the commiſſion of the Almighty? or if he came, thus prepared, and furniſhed, to the ſacred taſk, that the facts which he relates are not to be conſidered as hiſtorical truths? Some metaphorical expreſſions are to be met with in all hiſtories: but metaphorical expreſſions do not of themſelves conſtitute an apologue, or moral fable. The learned prelate therefore does not detract from the reality of the fact, when he acknowledges, that ſome part of the *Moſaick* narration, according to the eaſtern manner is cloathed in metaphor. Let us not jumble fable and metaphor together, for they are certainly very diſtinct things.

[y] Pag. 128. [z] Pag. 135.

In

In ſhort, our religion will not permit us to look upon it as a fable, when it is alluded to by the apoſtles of *Chriſt*, the great preachers of our religion, as a fact; when they no where give the leaſt intimation that it is to be conſtrued as fabulous; when the benefit of *Chriſt*'s obedience, humiliation, and paſſion is deduced by them from the reality of this fact; neither can we look upon *Moſes* in the ſame light with *Sanconiatho*; neither has the writer, I have been conſidering, yet proved, what he aſſerts, that "the "*matter* of the hiſtory, whether inſpired, or "not, is abſolutely inconſiſtent with the "character of an hiſtorical narration, and "muſt ever convince all, who conſider it "without prejudice, that it is wholly fabu-"lous, and allegorical."[a] It hath not convinced the ancient *Jewiſh* church; it hath not convinced the generality of learned chriſtians; it hath not convinced the evangeliſts and apoſtles. Our author, upon all occaſions, is very free with his aſſertions; but he wants once more to be put in mind, of what he has *frequently* been reminded, that aſſertion is not proof. "It may be abſurd to him;" let him by neceſſary arguments make it ap-

[a] Pag. 135.

pear ſo to others. Or elſe, if he has a peculiar way of thinking to himſelf, this is neither the fault of revelation, nor of the ſacred writings. If he cannot be ſatisfied with ſuch proof, as ſatisfies other candid, impartial inquirers; ſuch as the nature of things admits; ſuch as has manifeſtly ſatisfied the apoſtles of *Chriſt*; let him not call *their* judgment in queſtion: if he is reſolved to find out new ways of interpreting ſcripture, which have neither foundation, nor authority from ſcripture, neither are agreeable to ſcripture; let him enjoy his interpretations in private by himſelf; but let him not diſturb the faith of well-meaning ſincere chriſtians, with aſſertions, which he is neither able, neither attempts to prove. For, according to his own way of [b] expreſſion, "by "the ſame method of reaſoning, by the li-"berty which he every where aſſumes, of "aſſerting premiſes, and taking every thing "for granted, which tends to confirm his "own hypotheſis," he may prove any doctrine to be not divine, to be merely human, to be fabulous, "or whatever he pleaſes to "make of it."

[c] In one place he aſſerts, that according to the hiſtorical narration, "reaſon and nature

[b] Pag. 141—2. [c] Pag. 104.

"appear

"appear to have had no rule in the paradi-
"ſiacal ſtate; that all things in it were or-
"dered miraculouſly and ſupernaturally by
"the immediate interpoſition of God; and
"that the admoniſher no ſooner retired from
"the elbow of our firſt parents, than the
"ſerpent ſtept in, and beguiled them." But where does he find this, that all things were thus managed ſupernaturally in paradiſe? And "that a divine admoniſher there, had "been conſtantly at the elbow of our firſt "parents?" It is certain we do not find it in the book of *Moſes*. Has not our author's imagination here helped him forward a little in premiſes? And his fancy ſupplied him with ſuppoſitions, for the ſacred hiſtorian? Is he not here a little guilty of that freedom of taking things for granted, with which he charges others? And may he not thus ſupport what doctrines he pleaſes, from the authority of the ſacred writings, and by the ſame method of reaſoning make *Moſes* ſpeak whatever he can deſire him?

When our author therefore is thus peremptory in his judgment and aſſertions, without any authority from *Moſes*, or the ſubſequent inſpired writers, concerning the facts of ancient days; the tranſactions of our firſt parents; the primæval diſpenſations of pro-

vidence; the poſſibility of any deception from inviſible evil beings, or the hiſtorical verity of the doctrines of divine inſpiration; may we not aſk him this queſtion; haſt *thou* entered into the counſels of the Almighty? Or knoweſt thou the beginning of his ways? And apply to him the words of the book of *Job*, in return for his quotation from the ſame holy authority, *knoweſt thou it becauſe thou waſt then born, or becauſe the number of thy days is great? Who is this, that darkeneth counſel by words without knowledge? Surely he openeth his mouth in vain, and multiplieth words without knowledge.*[d]

This leads me to conclude, as was propoſed in the *fourth* and *laſt* place, with a ſhort remark, or two, ſeaſonable to ourſelves at the preſent juncture.

The *firſt* remark which I ſhall offer is this, that men ſhould be cautious, eſpecially thoſe that are in the younger part of life, how they venture to ſet out in ſcepticiſm. For there ſeems to be a regular progreſs in incredulity. Few men begin with the denial of eſſential articles at firſt; the fathers of the church firſt ſhall fall a ſacrifice, and afterwards *Moſes* himſelf ſhall not be ſpared.

[d] Job xxxviii. 2, 21. xxxv. 16.

The

The *ſecond* remark is this, that men ſhould be cautious of indulging a common weakneſs of nature, an ambition of ſhewing a ſuperiority in knowledge, by a particularity in opinion: careful to confine their ſpeculations within the limits of human reaſon: mindful in divine matters not to require greater proof than the nature of things will admit; greater than reaſon can give, or revelation has vouchſafed.

A vain affectation of knowledge was fatal to our firſt parents; and we have but too great reaſon to fear, that it has likewiſe been deſtructive to many of their poſterity. When perſons grow fond of advancing new opinions, in order to appear ſingularly eminent in judgment, or to ſhew their abilities in diſputation; when they forſake the fountains of living knowledge; it is no wonder *that they fall into divers idle and hurtful errors*; and it is well if they are not *drowned thereby in deſtruction and perdition*.[e] Whereas, if ſuch men would bring their opinions to the tribunal of the goſpel of *Chriſt*, and his apoſtles; if they would but *hear Moſes, and the prophets*;[f] if they would pay ſome humble deference to the opinion of men of equal

[e] 1 Tim. vi. 9. [f] Luke xvi. 29.

learning

learning with themſelves; or think that any men *have* equal learning, abilities, or judgment, with themſelves; if they would curb the malice, the reſentments, the rancour, or the envy of their tempers; and bring their underſtandings a little in ſubjection *to the ſimplicity that is in* Chriſt;[g] they might ſave themſelves the trouble of much contradiction; free themſelves from the imputation of much pride, and fondneſs of their own conceits; from the accuſation of much diſhoneſty in making falſe quotations, or falſe conſtructions; which has ſometimes but too juſtly been the charge againſt the mighty *diſputers of this world*;[h] they would act more like ingenuous chriſtians; more like fair inquirers after true religion; or at leaſt like good, impartial, humble men; and if they would come to *the word of truth* in godly ſincerity, and a real thirſt after chriſtian knowledge; *the truth would make them* wiſe.

[g] 2 Cor. xi. 3. [h] 1 Cor. i. 20.

DISCOURSE VI.

The Grounds of Submiſſion to Government, the Origin of the different Modes of civil Polity, and the Happineſs of our own Form of Legiſlature in particular, conſidered.— Preached before the Univerſity of *Oxford, June* 11th, 1752, being the Anniverſary of his Majeſty's Acceſſion to the Throne.

ISAIAH XLIV. 28.

That ſaith of Cyrus, *He is my Shepherd, and ſhall perform all my Pleaſure.*

IF we conſider man merely as a *free agent*, we may be tempted to carry our notions of liberty too far, and interpret freedom into a privilege of licentiouſneſs. If we conſider him

him merely under the character of a *created* being, the duty which we ſhall find reſulting from thence will be that of obedience to his *Creator*. If we conſider him further as a being endued with *ſocial* diſpoſitions, and intended for *ſocial* life, a new field of duties will be opened to our view, relative to his *ſocial* capacity. We ſhall be led alſo to acknowledge the original Creator to be the ſovereign ſuperintendant of the *ſocial* as well as of the *natural* ſyſtem.

But as the whole race of men, in the preſent ſtate of things, is neceſſarily divided into diſtinct ſocieties, it is reaſonable to conclude, that the omniſcient providence of the Creator will inviſibly preſide in each: In *ſome* more mediately, and through a remoter chain of cauſes: in *others*, upon particular exigencies, by nearer and more direct interpoſitions of his power. If at any time *the foundations of the earth are out of courſe*,[a] it is no abſurdity to imagine, that the almighty architect may again interpoſe his hand to replace it upon its proper baſis. It is no inconſiſtency to ſuppoſe, that at *all* times, through the agency of men raiſed to high ſtations, and enlarged ſpheres of action, he may accompliſh the all-wiſe purpoſes of his will.

[a] Pſ. LXXXII. 6.

Thus

Thus far reaſon proceeds in her deductions: revelation ſtill affords a clearer light, informing us, that *this* hath been the real caſe. The *Jews* were for ſome time under an immediate theocracy, for the preſervation of the knowledge of the true God: and even after the ceſſation of that divine polity, the prophet *Iſaiah*, in the words now read, and in their context, according to his uſual ſublimity, gives us exalted ideas of the operations, and dictates of this ſupreme inviſible director, in ſentences prophetical of facts relative to the *Jewiſh* ſtate.

Thus ſaith the Lord thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb; I am the Lord that maketh all things, that ſtretcheth forth the heavens alone; that ſpreadeth abroad the earth by myſelf; that confirmeth the word of his ſervant, and performeth the counſel of his meſſengers; that ſaith to Jeruſalem, *Thou ſhalt be inhabited; and to the cities of* Judah, *Ye ſhall be built; and I will raiſe up the decayed places thereof: that ſaith of* Cyrus, *He is my ſhepherd, and ſhall perform all my pleaſure: even ſaying to* Jeruſalem, *Thou ſhalt be built, and to the temple, Thy foundation ſhall be laid.*[b]

[b] Iſa. XLIV. 24, 26, 28.

Hiſtories

Hiſtories inform us, that this *Cyrus* was a victorious prince; exalted by conqueſt a mighty monarch over the eaſtern world. Yet how triumphant ſoever he might be in the arm of fleſh, through ſuperior experience and ſkill in war, we find that he himſelf ſtill acknowledgeth his ſubordination to the king of heaven. For we read, that *in the firſt year of* Cyrus, *king of* Perſia, *the Lord ſtirred up the ſpirit of* Cyrus, *that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it alſo in writing, ſaying, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me, and he hath charged me to build him an houſe in* Jeruſalem, *which is in* Judah: *who is there among you of all his people? the Lord his God be with him, and let him go up.*[c] A very remarkable declaration *this* of confidence in the one ſupreme God, from a moſt accompliſhed heathen potentate! We find in profane hiſtory the ſame religious ſpirit breathing through his ſentiments, eſpecially towards his laſt moments, which might proceed from the ſecret ſuggeſtions of the ſame God of truth.

It would be ſuperfluous to prove before this audience, that the ſupreme magiſtrate

[c] 2 Chron. xxxvi. 22, 23.

hath

hath frequently been denominated among the ancients under the ſtile and title of a ſhepherd: which figure, no doubt, was taken from a ſimilitude of care, and wathfulneſs in the *one*, over his flock, to that of the *other*, over the community.

The words of the text, and a due reflexion upon the original ſource, to which the Holy Spirit aſcribes the power of *Cyrus*, concurrent with his own acknowledgments, together with a conſideration of the co-operating human means, by which his dominion was acquired and eſtabliſhed, will furniſh our minds with ſeveral uſeful remarks, ſuitable to the inſtitution of the preſent feſtival; directive of our civil conduct: and our meditations may be digeſted under the following topics of inquiry:

Firſt, into the foundation of civil polity in general, and the origin of its various modes and forms.

Secondly, into the peculiar advantages of our own form of legiſlature in particular.

Thirdly, into the uſe of ſuch inſtituted feſtivals as the preſent, deducible from the doctrine here delivered.

Firſt

Firſt then, if we begin our inquiries with the foundation of civil polity in general, we ſhall find one of the moſt obvious conceptions that occurs to us concerning the nature of man is, that he is a *political* being: i. e. a being formed for neceſſary conjunction in ſociety. Our numerous wants, and dependencies upon each other, from the time of infant weakneſs to decrepit age, even through the ſtage of manly ſtrength and vigour, the mutual aſſiſtances which we are enabled to communicate to each other, the irkſomeneſs of ſolitude, the delights of friendſhip, have always proved, that man muſt ſeek for the happineſs and ſupport of his nature in ſocial connexions; and conſequently that he was intended by the author of his nature for a ſocial agent.

Monkiſh ſolitude is as far from the purpoſes of humanity, as it is from religion. For what would become of the human ſpecies, and even of the ſecluded hermit himſelf, if all men, like himſelf, were to dedicate their days, and rational faculties, to ſolitary inactivity? where would be the riches of the unconnected multitude? where the common conveniencies or ſecurity of life, without the ſubſervient hand of the labourer, the communicative induſtry of the artificer,

or the protecting eye of the watchful magiſtrate? It is the ſtate, that guards the retirement of the hermit; whatever notions of independency he may have formed within himſelf. Nature then, that is, the regular eſtabliſhed order of providence in the natural world, directs man to ſociety: but all ſociety, eſpecially as far as we are converſant in it, amidſt infirm depraved creatures, neceſſarily infers, nay ſuppoſes ſubordination: and all eſtabliſhed regular ſubordination is *government*.

This ſhort chain of deductions leads us to one general concluſion, that God *wills* government amongſt mankind, which is no more than ſociety eſtabliſhed. And therefore in all debates about the general foundation of authority and ſubjection, the beſt way will be to carry men back to the firſt directing mover towards civil polity; to *his* will and appointment, who, in the natural courſe of things, hath made ſubordination neceſſary; who conſtituted this ſtate of mutual dependance amongſt his creatures.

St. *Paul* therefore very fitly repreſents this neceſſary ſubordination in ſociety, the connexions between each member of the community, and their mutual dependance upon each other, by the metaphor of an human

body, wherein no one organ, joint, or ligament, can be ſpared without a manifeſt inconvenience to the whole: So that *the eye cannot ſay unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you; nay much more thoſe members of the body which ſeem to be more feeble*, i. e. inferior, or leſs excellent, *are neceſſary.*[d] Men in ſhort, eſpecially the more feeble, (and who would not be feeble without alliance?) men, I ſay, neceſſarily unite into ſocieties, not only for mutual aſſiſtance in providing the conveniencies of life, and for mutual ſupport, but alſo that they may have the united ſtrength of the whole body to defend their properties. Thus far reaches the uſe, and abſolute neceſſity of ſubordination in general.

As to the origin of the different forms of civil polity, if we would not be deceived herein, if we would fairly examine things, and proceed upon ſuch principles, as may be of ſervice to the community wherein we are ſituated, not ſuſpending action or ſubmiſſion to *any* form, till our own maxims are eſtabliſhed, we muſt not be guided merely by hypotheſis, but advert to fact; not adhering

[d] 1 Cor. xii. 21, 22.

ob-

obſtinately to the determinations of what we may imagine *ought* to be; but obſerving what we ſhall find to have *really been* the foundation of empires. For if all ſubmiſſion and allegiance were to be ſuſpended in the ſtate, till *every* individual was ſatisfied in the eſtabliſhment of his own ſcheme, nothing but confuſion could enſue. All government, and the very being of ſociety muſt drop at once. It might rather perhaps become chriſtians to conſider, what gave to the *Roman* emperors their title, even when the apoſtles commanded their converts to ſubmit peaceably to their authority; or to *Tiberius* his right, when our Saviour injoined men to pay him tribute.

The firſt original form of civil government has been placed by ſome in paternal authority. This might probably have been the ſeat of its reſidence, while the family of mankind was ſmall. In the infancy of the world, when the whole human ſpecies was included within the narrow precincts of one habitation, it is reaſonable to conclude, that all authority would reſide in the father of the houſhold. The tender care and inſpection with which he had guarded their childhood, and conducted their youthful imbecillity into a ſtate of manhood, muſt make them repoſe an entire confidence in his affection; and his more

aged experience render them ſubmiſſive to his judgment. The exerciſe of his guardianſhip indeed, in that primæval ſtate, was confined within a very narrow ſphere of watchfulneſs. They were only to be forewarned againſt the ſavage beaſts of prey, that ranged the field. As to the more ravenous tyger, and more ſubtle wolf of prey of the human ſpecies, there yet were none of that kind ranging abroad, to be guarded againſt. We read indeed of a very early inſtance of domeſtic murther: but then the only murtherer in the world was ſoon pointed out to the family, and a mark ſet upon him. The fact had been committed through the inſtigation of envy, not for any litigious incurſion upon diſputed property, or the extenſion of domains, the moſt frequent cauſe of ſlaughters afterwards. The father was ſtill ſeated in his primitive chair of authority, which no perſon could diſpute with him, and the children ſafe from foreign invaſions. Thus the direction of this little original commonwealth would naturally center in the common father of the race.

But as this family increaſed, and grew too large for the limits of its own incloſures, diſtinct branches were ſeparated from it. Theſe ſeparate families would naturally form themſelves into diſtinct ſocieties, each under the

authority

authority of its reſpective father, who had led forth the colony. And as theſe little independent ſtates were multiplied, each under its own domeſtic laws, and the guardianſhip of its own private father, it is natural to ſuppoſe, that if the head of any one collateral branch ſhould pretend to uſurp authority, or arbitrarily domineer over the reſt, his claim would be ſoon diſputed. It would immediately be aſked, *who made* thee *a ruler, and a judge over* us?[e] have not *we* a father, who led us forth, and who protects us, to whom therefore we will ſubmit? rule over thine own colony, and protect thine own children.

But if the intereſts of two or more colonies became ſo naturally connected by reaſon of their vicinity, or other circumſtances, that they could not ſubſiſt ſo ſafely, or conveniently in a diſunited form, theſe intereſts, and theſe relations would make them ſeek after ſome common bond of union; and ſubject themſelves, for mutual benefit and ſupport, to one common ruler. This ruler might probably have been the father of one of theſe originally independent colonies, whom they had obſerved to be moſt active, faithful, and judicious; moſt able to watch and protect

[e] Acts vii. 27.

them againſt foreign annoyances, or to quell any domeſtic diſturbances; whom for theſe purpoſes, they agreed by mutual conſent, to place as their governor over them. Here then was a mixture of *fatherhood* and *compact*: paternal right, i. e. the direction of nature gave him a title to preſcribe to his own family: mutual compact of the two uniting bodies called him forth to preſide over others, on account of his diſtinguiſhed merit.

As the world grew more fully peopled with inhabitants, and the earth afforded leſs extenſive room of property to each, mutual jealouſies would naturally ariſe between different ſtates, and diſputes about property neceſſarily ſpring up. Ambition and avarice then began to ſhew their baleful influence; the leader of one people began to march forth againſt another; hoſtile acts commenced; arms determined the title to the diſputed property, and with it fixed anew the ſtyle and power of government. The vanquiſhed colony might ſoon find it prudent, for the ends of ſocial life, to ſubmit peaceably to their late conqueror; being convinced by their captivity of the inability of their former leader to protect them; of the ſuperior prudence and experience of their new victor, and his capacity to guard them againſt any future foreign

foreign invaſions. To *whom* therefore they were ſubjected at firſt by force, as their *conqueror*, to *him* they now conſent to pay allegiance by choice, as their moſt able *protector*.

For I may appeal to hiſtories, whether men have not been induced to give up, by conſent, the reins of polity into *his* hands, even afterwards to rejoice, and triumph in *his* government, and go forth to war againſt their neighbours, under *his* banner and auſpices, who was at firſt only an invader, and a victor over themſelves. Here then is a mixture of *paternal authority*, of *compact*, and of *conqueſt*. Paternal claim gave him the firſt title to preſidency over his own children and family: conſent of neighbouring colonies made him a ruler over other families: the law of arms made him victor over nations: the voluntary agreement of theſe nations to peaceable ſubmiſſion afterwards confirmed his right of ruling over them. Thus when arms prevailed, conqueſt gave claim to power, and with the victor's laurel beſtowed the monarch's ſceptre.

Thus we ſhall find, that the title, which *Cyrus* enjoyed to many parts of his empire, was founded originally in conqueſt: yet we obſerve him at the ſame time aſſerted by the firſt all-wiſe mover as a ſecondary agent under

der him, advanced by theſe means *to perform all his pleaſure*. And in the beginning of the next chapter, he is denominated under the ſacred character of the *Lord's Anointed*: *Thus ſaith the Lord to his anointed* Cyrus, *whoſe right hand I have holden to ſubdue nations before him; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places ſtrait, I will break in pieces the gates of braſs, and cut in ſunder the bars of iron, and I will give thee the hidden riches of ſecret places.*[f]

In proceſs of time, when ſovereigns began to abuſe their power to the oppreſſion of their ſubjects, and that authority, which had been intended to protect, was made uſe of to enſlave, civil animoſities then aroſe; and as men alternately aſſerted their natural liberties with ſucceſs, or were ſubdued by the ſuperior force of the tyrant, ſtates became differently modelled. Few long remained in a condition of abject ſlavery without ſome commotion, ſome ſtruggles and throws of nature to regain her freedom. But where ſubjects vindicated their liberties with final ſucceſs, there was room for an infinite variety of different forms and models to be introduced, according to the different intereſts, tempers, and circumſtances of the people.

[f] Iſai. xlv. 1—3.

Accordingly

Accordingly we perceive, that various prevailing principles or ſentiments of government in different ages, various maxims, that for a time have gained the aſcendant, various prevailing humours or temperaments of the ſubject, or of popular leading men in the community, have diſpoſed a nation, in ſome ages, to ſubmit to *one* form of government, rather than *another*. Conquerors have undoubtedly been oftentimes inſtruments to introduce various forms of legiſlature, whether as a bleſſing, or puniſhment to nations under *him*, who ſaid once of *Cyrus*, *He ſhall perform all my pleaſure*.

The inconveniencies of *one* kind ſeem as frequently to have cauſed others to be deviſed. For when kings, who *are*, or *ought*, by their paternal vigilance, to be as fathers to their people, have trampled upon the rules of paternal tenderneſs; when the father grows arbitrarily tyrannical in his commands, and inſtead of acting the part of an affectionate parent, acts that of an unnatural oppreſſor, it is no wonder if the children begin to remonſtrate, and endeavour to convert the ſtream of power into that channel of gentle rational diſcipline, for which government was at firſt ordained.

For the all-bounteous Creator certainly can never *will* the continuance of that power, to the

the deſtruction and miſery of his creatures, which was intended purely for their welfare and happineſs. Accordingly we find from the hiſtory and experience of all ages and nations, that nature will remonſtrate againſt tyranny, cruelty, and unjuſt exerciſes of power. Paſſions are implanted in the human breaſt by the very author of ſociety, to be alarming, active guardians of our freedom; and in proportion as the ſpring of civil liberty hath been bent downwards by oppreſſion, it will by a kind of natural elaſticity return, and react with the greater vigor.

Correſpondent to theſe remonſtrances of nature, we obſerve the voice of God, againſt unnatural oppreſſors, under the perſon of *Coniah* the ſon of *Jehoiakim* king of *Judah*: *Shalt thou reign becauſe thou cloſeſt thyſelf in cedar? did not thy father do juſtice and judgment? then it was well with him. But thine eyes, and thine heart are not but for thy covetouſneſs, and for oppreſſion, and for violence to do it: therefore as I live, ſaith the Lord, though* Coniah *the ſon of* Jehoiakim, *king of* Judah, *were the ſignet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence.*[z] God himſelf likewiſe hath more than once judicially executed the denuncia-

[z] Jer. xxii. 15, 17, 24.

tion

tion in fact amidſt his own people, having transferred the ſceptre from one family to another, where the father thereof had not walked before him in righteouſneſs and judgment. Thus he rent the kingdom from *Saul*, and gave it to *David*, and his children, by a perpetual covenant; yet we remark even *this* covenant conditional; that it was not without interruptions of peace and order in the ſucceſſion, where the iniquity of the governor, or the ſins of the people gave occaſion. *I will cut off from* Ahab, ſaith the ſevere ſentence of God, *every one that is left to him in* Iſrael,[h] under a proverbial phraſe of thoſe days which denoteth total exciſion. Such revolutions might ſeem in thoſe ages, at firſt ſight, to be brought about by the ſole conduct of man, and natural means; but the ſpirit of revelation, which ſeeth deeper than man ſeeth, informs us, that they proceeded from the juſt judgment of a ſupreme, inviſible director.

Again, variations of circumſtances, purſuits, and occupations may have made one and the ſame nation vary from itſelf, as to the modes of its civil polity, in different periods of its exiſtence: whilſt each mode was peculiarly adapted to the age in which it prevailed. Thus

[h] 1 Kings xxi. 21.

abſolute

abſolute power may beſt anſwer the ſecret ſpeedy execution required for warlike purpoſes, the haſty propulſion of publick danger, or the ſudden extenſion of empire. For which reaſon even the *Roman* ſtate, though ſo jealous of its freedom, yet ſometimes choſe to conſtitute its dictators. Merchandice and arts may beſt flouriſh under a government ſomewhat more popular, or which admits a mixture of the *ariſtocratick* kind, and allows room for the emulation of private ſubjects to exert itſelf. We have no argument to demonſtrate, that the almighty Sovereign ever intended *one univerſal* form of government to be eſtabliſhed over the face of the whole earth, in *one uninterrupted lineal* ſucceſſion. If we argue from his providential permiſſions in *all* countries, or his judicial interpoſitions in *ſome*, we may infer the contrary.

He governed his own people, when he himſelf was their peculiar ſuperintendant, by the agency of judges: but when they deſired a king, according to the eaſtern mode of polity, he indulged them in their requeſt; and then the immediate theocracy ceaſed.

St. *Peter* repreſents the ſeveral ranks and degrees of civil magiſtrates as the ordinance of *man:* which, in reſpect to the original ſource of their authority, are by St. *Paul* ſtiled the ordinance

ordinance of *God*. *Submit yourſelves*, ſaith the former apoſtle, *to every ordinance of* man, πάσῃ ἀνθρωπίνῃ κτίσει; *to every* creature *of man*; or magiſtrate created *by man: whether it be to the king as ſupreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are ſent by him, for the puniſhment of evil doers, and for the praiſe of them that do well.*[i] We have, in theſe words, repreſented to us, in one conciſe view, the true end of civil polity, the conſtituent diſpoſers of civil power, the only ſolid ground, and motive of ſubmiſſion. The end thereof is the peace, and happineſs of the human ſpecies, ſupported by the reward of ſocial virtue, and the puniſhment of lawleſs vice: the true principle of ſubmiſſion is that of obedience to the will of God: we are are exhorted to ſubmit ourſelves, *for the Lord's ſake*; whether as creatures of the great God, and conſequently under a duty of conformity to his appointments; or as diſciples of *Chriſt*, and conſequently bound by the laws of *Chriſt*; or as concerned to promote the religion of *Jeſus*, demonſtrating the good effects of chriſtian faith upon ſociety, by our own peaceable ſubjection to every ſocial ordinance. The conſtituents of civil authority, under the ſupreme Creator, are men: the extent of ſub-

[i] 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14.

miſſion

miſſion to the ſeveral modes and forms of legiſlature is implied in this phraſe, *to* every *ordinance*, πάσῃ κτίσει; and the dependance of theſe various modes upon the voluntary deciſions and determinations of different complex bodies is intimated in this phraſe, *to every ordinance of* man: ἀνθρωπίνῃ κτίσει.

Upon the whole then, the truth ſeems to be this; that God intended government among men, from the circumſtances in which he hath created men. He hath made them mutually dependent upon each other, and conſequently ſocial ſubordinate beings. But then he leaves to the determination of the different bodies and complexions of men, as ſecondary agents under him, the choice, and appointment of the different forms in which they will be governed. Yet he expects ſubmiſſion to *all*, when they *are* appointed; otherwiſe there would be nothing elſe but a perpetual round of variations, and revolutions, of diſcord, war, and tumult in ſociety, according to the different fancies, and intereſts, and ambitious ſchemes of each individual.

As to the reſpective excellencies of each form, theſe have long been matter of diſpute amongſt men of a political turn; and the juſt preference of either may probably continue ſo, among diſputatious men, as long as ſome infirmities

infirmities or defects ſhall attend the execution even of the beſt ordinances among mankind: that is, as long as men ſhall continue to be, what they are, frail, imperfect creatures. However thus much we may plainly perceive, that God wills ſubmiſſion to *ſome* form, becauſe he wills *ſociety*, having created mutual dependances, and having made mutual ſubordinate communications neceſſary to the ſupport of the individual. Thus far ſubmiſſion, even for *conſcience ſake*, appears a duty upon natural principles of obedience to the will of our Creator, manifeſted in the relations of natural things. Infirmities *may* and *will* adhere to adminiſtrations of government; as well as to every other diſcharge of duty amidſt imperfect beings. For we muſt remember that earthly governors are *men*, and not *angels*. Scripture indeed, in reſpect to the dignity of their office, and its ſimilarity to the divine ſuperintendance, hath ſtiled them *gods*; yet the very beſt, in the records of hiſtory, have always had imperfections enough, even in their higheſt improvements, to convince us that they were ſtill *men*. Conſequently not every defect of prudence, according to our meaſures of judgment, in the ſovereign, nothing but the higheſt violations of *public* juſtice, and ſubverſions of *public* right,

right, and of the very end of government, can diſſolve the duty of allegiance in the ſubject.

The happineſs, and ſuperior excellence of our own form of legiſlature, and the great reaſon we have to rejoice in it, which was the *ſecond* point propoſed for our meditation, is ſufficiently diſcernible in this one inſtance; it is *that* very form of government, which ſpeculative writers of the greateſt eminence, both ancient and modern, have pointed out, as the moſt *perfect*, though unable to introduce it into their reſpective ſtates. A monarchy duly limited has been looked upon as the brighteſt pattern of perfection in government; but *that* a pattern in ſpeculation rather than reducible into fact: a light to be viewed and admired at a diſtance; the friendly warmth of whoſe benign rays could not be felt within their own hemiſphere: a plan calculated for ſpeedy execution, upon any ſudden emergency, and for wiſdom of council, where time for deliberation is admitted: wherein the king has authority to declare war, and command immediate action, upon any haſty approach of his enemies, or to accelerate his enterprizes ſecretly, for any important advantage to the ſtate: but then the nerves of war, the ſupply of public contributions for its

its continuance, are ſubjected to the prudence of public conſideration. Thus happily are we conſtituted to enjoy one of the principal privileges of monarchy, the celerity and ſecrecy of its operations, without the danger of that, which is one of its greateſt miſeries, a ſubjection to arbitrary will and diſpoſal.

It is in peace likewiſe the peculiar happineſs of our conſtitution, that the experience of the whole nation is, as it were, annually ſummoned, and compacted into one body; that diſcreet and able repreſentatives of the people are called together to conſult the welfare of the whole community. Thus, if the remark of the wiſe man be true, *that in the multitude of counſellors there is ſafety*,[j] we muſt conclude, that our own republic, guided by diſcretion, is built upon a rock of ages. How far ſhe hath proſpered in fact, through many generations, may be ſeen in that high ſeat of character, which ſhe hath long poſſeſſed amidſt her neighbours. Our conſtitution in ſhort enjoys the mixed emoluments ſelected out of every form, without the ſeparate diſadvantages attending each diſtinct. Our *King*, limited in power, reaches forth to us the privileges of *monarchy* without tyranny: our *Peers* poſſeſs the rank of *ariſtocratic* go-

j Prov. xi. 14.

vernors, without the feuds and inteſtine ſlaughters ariſing from the jealouſy of nobles unreſtrained by any ſuperior head: our *Repreſentatives* of the commons are a branch of *democratic* power, without the confuſion, diſſipation, and madneſs of an unreſtrained common multitude.

Never was *monarch* leſs deſirous of unlimited lawleſs authority over his ſubjects, than the *prince*, with whom the ſupreme power of this ſo happily tempered community is at preſent intruſted. We may this day congratulate ourſelves in a *prince*, whoſe ambition it is to fulfil the end of government in one particular character, for which civil polity is recommended by St. *Paul*, whoſe deſire it is to govern rather in the diſtribution of civil rewards, than the infliction of puniſhments: yet when nature and humanity oblige him to puniſh, we have ſeen, from a late inſtance in this place, the reſentment with which he feels the loſs of a ſubject, conſequently his parental tenderneſs over each, from his ſolicitude to bring an horrid parricide[k] to clear judicial conviction, and the enormous criminal once convicted, to condign puniſhment; if any puniſhment can be called worthy of a crime ſo abhorrent to nature.

[k] A perſon convicted at the aſſizes held at *Oxford* in the year 1752, and executed for the atrocious crime of poiſoning her father.

To

To aim at the whole extent of the royal character, would carry me beyond the uſual limits of time preſcribed to my office in this place; yet ſomething is due to the authority of our church in her inſtitution of this day's ſolemnity, as indeed much is due to the merit of the royal perſonage anointed over us.

For if it be an allowed injuſtice to defraud any common member in the community of his due character, how much more to defraud the *ſovereign* magiſtrate? whoſe *fame* is more widely canvaſſed; whoſe *example* is more extenſive; whoſe *honour* is more redundant to the credit, or diſcredit of the body, over which he preſides.

Here then let us begin to honour the king in that part of his character, wherein the king principally delighteth to be honoured, his inviolable attachment to the ſtrict veracity of his word, and his ſacred regard to diſtributive juſtice among his ſubjects: let us acknowledge his affection, which amply ſupplies the room of a father to the promiſing heir of his crown and dignity: his diſcernment in the choice of the propereſt governors to preſide over the moſt important point of intereſt to his ſucceſſor, and to the kingdom, the formation of its prince's mind: his ſympathetic ſenſation of the widow's grief: his

benevolent ſtudy to relieve it, in his tender guardianſhip over the reſt of her royal children: his faithful vigilance over his dominions, as his family extended. The proviſions made on a late intereſting occaſion are a conſpicuous inſtance of his foreſeeing prudence: proviſions not better adapted to ſolace the heart of the fatherleſs, than to confirm the heart of the nation: which made the heart of the widow, as it were, to revive; and the heart of the nation to reſt with confidence, well ſecured in the poſſeſſion of her ancient degree of regal dignity. Wiſdom may be eſteemed; juſtice may be revered; power may be dreaded; but equity, integrity, humanity, paternal affection, and univerſal benevolence, muſt in every character be beloved.

His eſteem for academic learning, whatever unfavourable opinions ſome may entertain thereof, and his ſenſe of the public benefits ariſing from this method of training up the youthful mind, is proved in his own munificent endowment, or rather foundation, as it may be called, of an univerſity for the ſervice of his ſubjects ſeated within his native dominions.[1] His regard frequently expreſſed to

[1] The univerſity of Gottingen.

the

the two ancient ſeats of literature, which have been long the eyes and ornaments of this kingdom, his annual aſſignment, out of his revenues, of a liberal ſtipend, for the ſupport of an additional profeſſor in each, dedicated to the encouragement of modern languages and hiſtory, demand the gratitude of all who love theſe ſeats. May no competitions ever prevail, or be encouraged between theſe two illuſtrious ſiſters, engaged in the ſame glorious work of education, either unworthy of themſelves, or men of the politeſt learning! May they ſtand united in affection, as in the breaſt of the king! May their only emulation be to excel all other ſeminaries of ſcience, as much in knowledge, and the rudiments of every ſocial, and private virtue, as they ſurpaſs all others in the nature of their conſtitution, and truly academic diſcipline! And may they always retain and cheriſh thoſe ſeeds of ſubjection and loyalty to princes, which have been their ornament, and ancient ſtabiliment before the thrones of princes!

Theſe are the ſchools, where the foundations are laid of moral, civil, and religious virtue. Let us take heed that the rudiments of ſcience be kept uncorrupt: that the child in knowledge be fed with *the ſincere milk of the word* of truth. For ſuch as the nutrition

is, that forms, as it were, the firſt ſtamina of life, ſuch will be the ſtrong meat that is digeſted afterwards. Such as the ſpeculative principles are, ſuch will the practical habits exert themſelves, either to the benefit, or prejudice, to the honour, or diſcredit of the fountain, whence they were imbibed.

Young perſons ſhould here eſpecially learn thoſe principles of moral ſcience, and civil ſubjection; ſhould here acquaint themſelves with thoſe foundations of government, and the true end of its appointment; ſhould here, by their conformity to *academic* laws, contract thoſe habits, and exhibit thoſe ſpecimens of ſubmiſſion in their early years, which may promiſe, and ſend them forth in maturer days, orderly, and peaceable, and uſeful members of the ſtate, whereof they conſtitute a part. For it is generally obſerved, that thoſe perſons, who in their younger years have been diſobedient or refractory to their governors, within the ſmaller ſocieties of education, have uſually come abroad perverſe, and obſtinate, and troubleſome members of the great political world: uneaſy within themſelves, and diſagreeable to mankind. Habits of any ſort are difficult to be corrected; but more eſpecially habits of diſobedience, pertneſs, licentiouſneſs,

tiouſneſs, and ſelf-conceited contumacy ſuperior to advice.

Theſe are the reflexions, which the preſent ſolemnity ſuggeſted: pardon me, if I have treſpaſſed upon your patience too long! Theſe introduce my *third* and laſt remark, which was to infer, in few words, the uſe of ſuch ſtated feſtivals, and aſſemblies, as the preſent.

We are called together, by the appointment of our church, in one joyful congregation, to return our tribute of thanks to the great diſpoſer of all authority, for the happineſs we enjoy under the peaceful eſtabliſhment of a regular ſociety, and to pray for the continuance of the bleſſing, under the care and protection of a vigilant monarch. Such a ſolemnity therefore will naturally call to our recollection the benefits, which we receive from this eſtabliſhment, that ſo we may not offer thanks to God for bleſſings which we do not underſtand, nor prayers for the continuance of that, which we do not really deſire.

One reaſon why we are injoined to offer up prayers, and ſupplications for kings, is to inſtruct us, that we are dependent upon the *Lord of Lords* for the bleſſings which we receive by the hands of kings: to teach us at the ſame time our obligations of gratitude to thoſe, whom we acknowledge it the providence

of God to have placed over us. Princes, at the ſame time, are reminded of their duty to their people, by the prayers, which they offer up in conjunction with their people. This is the excellence of our liturgy appointed for this day, and alſo of the conſtant communion ſervice of our church, that it is calculated to anſwer both theſe purpoſes. Wherein the king is reminded in the moſt ſolemn manner, *whoſe miniſter he is*; and the people are admoniſhed, *whoſe authority he hath*. Such a ſervice cannot but be excellently adapted to promote mutual amity and confidence between prince and people; to diſpoſe all ſerious minds, actuated by a ſenſe of the preſence they are in, and of the omniſcient being, to whom they offer up their addreſſes, to unite earneſtly in all human means for the promotion of thoſe bleſſings, which they aſk at the throne of grace. Let it then finally be obſerved, that as no religion is more favourable to princes, ſo none eſtabliſhes ſubjection upon better principles, or inculcates it by more regular, repeated ſuggeſtions, than that of the *church of England*. It is the glory of this ſeat of religion, and literature, to have been, through many ages, one of the main pillars, and ſupports of the church of *England*.

May

May we all anſwer the true end of its foundation, in our labours for the promotion of the divine glory, and the ſupport, and dignity of our happy conſtitution both in church, and ſtate! May he who raiſed up *Cyrus* his ſhepherd, *to perform all his pleaſure*, preſerve a ſhepherd over us, concerned like *Cyrus* for the houſe of God, ſtrenuous for the faith of which he is ſtiled the defender! And may this, with reſpect to our commonwealth, be the reſolution of every one of *us*, which was the rule of *Cicero*, with little variation: "As "we all ſail, like as in one common ſhip, "may we unite to keep her in the true courſe "to public happineſs! We hope it may be "with a proſperous gale; but whatever the "winds may be, *our* beſt endeavours ſhall not "be wanting."

Above all, let us remember, that the œconomy of this world, with all its ſeveral intereſts, and modes of polity, about which we now conteſt ſo much, ſhall one day have an end: and then ſhall men no longer be weighed in the balance, by the little diſtinctions of fortune, or elevations of civil dignity; but according as they have anſwered the ends of providence, in theſe his civil diſpenſations: and when the great conqueror of all, death

ſhall

ſhall have leveled all, and himſelf at length *be ſwallowed up in victory*,[m] an immediate univerſal theocracy ſhall then begin, *and God ſhall be all in all.*[n]

[m] 1 Cor. xv. 54. [n] 1 Cor. xv. 28.

DISCOURSE VII.

The Dangers and fatal Conſequences of civil Strife.—Preached before the Houſe of Commons, on *Monday, January* 31, 1757, appointed to be kept as the Day of the Martyrdom of King *Charles* I.

PROV. XVII. 14.

The Beginning of Strife is as when one letteth out Water.

WE are called together this day into the houſe of God, by national authority, to recollect, and lament the miſeries once introduced into this kingdom by the outrages of public licentiouſneſs. And we cannot too often, or too earneſtly inculcate loyalty,

loyalty, and regular ſubmiſſion to laws, upon a licentious age and people. This is the important leſſon of the day; and hiſtory, and lamentable experience inforce the inference.

Not indeed as a leſſon, or argument of admonition to be inculcated by me on this grand council of national deliberation, before whom I have the honour to be called this day to ſpeak: ſuch inculcation might be deemed uſeleſs and impertinent. The judgment, wiſdom, and equity of its members, will make general harmony therein preſumed; as far as harmony is conſiſtent with free deliberation: eſpecially while the approved experience, integrity, knowledge, and impartiality, which have ſo long been ſeated, with univerſal ſatisfaction, in the chair of the council, ſhall continue to preſide, and protect the orders of harmony. The end and object will naturally be one and the ſame with all, who have great property to maintain in public ſafety; however different their ſentiments may be about the means.

But exhortations to unanimity can never be unſeaſonable to free nations; to ſtates, that groan not under the fetters of abſolute, uncontrolable power. National deliberation ſuppoſes occaſional debate among perſonages of liberal minds. Maſters of rhetoric there-

fore

fore of old, well-wiſhers to ſociety, have delivered rules for the conduct of debate in ſuch deliberative aſſemblies. For debate does not always, as hath ſometimes been improperly interpreted, imply divulſions of affection. There is great difference between debate, and ſtrife; as between wiſdom and folly. Debate may be carried on with zeal, and earneſtneſs of ſpirit, yet at the ſame time with ſocial amity of heart. For true debate is nothing more than invigorated converſation upon matters of weight and importance. Whereas ſtrife is noiſe without deliberation, or diſcretion; and is endleſs in the miſchiefs it produces.

Solomon, as a wiſe king, and a preacher, according to the character of king and prieſt in ancient days united, who had well obſerved mankind, and formed many experimental remarks upon the effects of human paſſions, delivers this obſervation among others to his people, as a ſtanding memorial, and admonition to be regarded in ſubſequent ages, that *the beginning of ſtrife is as when one letteth out water*.[a] When the mighty torrent is once permitted to break its boundaries, we know not how far it may extend itſelf, or what de-

[a] Prov. xvii. 14.

ſtruction

ſtruction it may ſpread: we know not where to ſtop, or how to recall it within its channel again. So when the outragious multitude of an incenſed people break the boundaries of law, the torrent ruſheth forth with uncontrolable violence; confuſion overſpreads the land; tide riſeth upon tide; and ſwelling wave oppreſſeth wave; the fruit of the country is deſtroyed before them, the full grown crop, and the ſhooting ear, and the riſing plant together; and the whole land is laid deſolate.

The unhappy cataſtrophe of this day, and the many ſcenes of deſolation, which preceded and enſued it, do but too far juſtify the remark. A comprehenſive hiſtory of the tranſactions that led thereunto, and attended it, is handed down to us: the *roll* thereof, according to the language of the prophet, is written as it were *within, and without:* the book is full and copious: *and there is written therein lamentation, and mourning, and woe.*[b]

Many remarks and inferences croud in upon us from the hiſtory of thoſe unhappy times, relative to all orders of men. I ſhall beg leave to inſtance in ſome few, which

[b] Ezek. 11. 9, 10.

moſt

moſt naturally occur, that they may juſtify the original inſtitution of the day, and render the preſent application of it truly uſeful and religious.

For the right buſineſs of the day is not to enhance or exaggerate the characters of the principal actors in thoſe unhappy times, which will only tend to exaſperate opponents: but to form reſolutions of avoiding rebellious examples, and licentious principles. If to rail were the ſole end of our meeting together on this day, it might be ſaid to us,, as was once ſaid to the *Corinthians* by St. *Paul*; *in this, my brethren, I praiſe you not, that ye come together, not for the better, but for the worſe.*[c] But we, it is to be hoped, have made a right uſe of the day already in our devotions, and have met together *for the better*, in our moral, and religious reflections.

And here one of the firſt reflections naturally recurring to your minds, for your minds will go before me in every thing, that I can this day pretend to offer; one of the firſt reflections recurring from the hiſtory of the day, and ſuggeſted in the text, will be this; that men cannot foreſee, how far ſtrife may carry them, when once they indiſcretely engage in the ſervices of contention. Many of thoſe who ſet out in legal oppoſition to abuſed

[c] 1 Cor. xi. 17.

prerogative at firſt, were hurried, either by precipitancy of paſſion, violence of natural temper, or at laſt by the exigencies of private, perſonal ſafety, through various degrees of litigation and conteſt, into meaſures, which at firſt would have ſtartled their unſeared conſciences: and their temerity unluckily made way for conſciences worſe than their own, and ſeared from the beginning of the tumult, to commit actions, which their own heart, even in its moſt exaſperated ſtate, could not have been induced to perpetrate.

Incroachments upon liberty had at firſt certainly been made by ſtrained prerogative. Incroachments upon prerogative were in return made by licentiouſneſs. The former would provoke the people: the latter would naturally incenſe the king. They met together with angry ſpirits: they parted in rage and fury. Altercations ſerved only to blow up the coals of reſentment. At length the flame burſt forth into open outrage. Lawleſs violations of prerogative ſoon enſued; and the progreſs, and the ſtrides were haſty from unbridled civil ſtrife into rebellion, from rebellion into anarchy and total confuſion.

Hence therefore princes may learn a caution, how they begin to ſtretch prerogative againſt law. Subjects ſhould learn a caution, how

how they begin to tranſgreſs law in oppoſition to prerogative. Both ſides were, either by their own paſſions, or the ſubtle management of artful deſigning men, carried further, than they could at firſt have poſſibly preconceived: both were ſufferers in the conſequences of their own tranſgreſſions; and the reſult was public calamity.

All the preceding ſteps, which on either ſide led the way to the fatal ſlaughter of this day, had been miſeries deplored on both ſides at the time of their origin, within many breaſts of true-grounded allegiance; as they were omens of greater ſucceeding miſeries. Miſeries not only felt by the innocent, inactive members of the body; but by many ſoon of the guilty inſtruments on both ſides, and firſt agents themſelves: pointed with this additional aggravation of woe, the ſtings of a guilty conſciouſneſs, that they had unwarily paved the road to bring down this deſtruction upon their own heads. The ſupreme powers of the commonwealth were violently convulſed; and when *the whole head was ſick*, it was natural, *that the whole heart ſhould ſoon be faint*.[d]

[d] Iſai. i. 5.

Your minds then will next be led, as often as this day revolves, to take a ſhort review of the miſeries, in which our fore-fathers by their unguarded quarrels, and licentiouſneſs, precipitately involved themſelves. A picture indeed of all the diſtreſſes that attended, would here be horrid; and is rather to be left, as it is drawn from the records of thoſe times, upon the tablet of your memory, than to be deſcribed in words. The perſons who firſt led on the van of troubles, as I have already obſerved, were ſome of the firſt and greateſt ſufferers therein. The diſtreſſes of the king, his impriſonment, and death, were to many but *the beginning of ſorrows.*

As to the king, his conduct was illuſtrious in tribulation; and uſeful examples of patience, and devout reſignation, might be drawn from the remembrance. The character of the king was never greater upon the throne, than it appeared upon the ſcaffold. He had been habitually upright and religious in private life: his piety was able to ſupport him under his load of afflictions: and his dignity in ſuffering was triumphant. So that the day of his death was to him, as it were the day of his victory: he triumphed over his enemies in eſcaping them; and over himſelf in forgiving them.

But

But I draw a veil over that, which moſt diſgraces our country! The deed is painted in your minds already! The uſe of annually looking back upon ſuch landſkips of miſery is, that men by viewing the conſequences of ſedition may learn to abhor, and guard againſt future rebellion.

As to the nation, it had been notoriouſly and confeſſedly wicked: perhaps not the leaſt part of its wickedneſs, nor the leaſt miſchievous, was that, which conſiſted in its diſſimulation. But it ſeemed every way prepared to draw down vengeance upon itſelf: and the viſitation lighted upon the moſt tender, and moſt affecting part of its conſtitution. The body ſocial deſerved puniſhment, and the viſitation fell upon the head. The ſins of a licentious people called down judgment upon them; and the effect of their rebellion againſt their king was their puniſhment. For in a natural way it introduced all the diſorders of anarchy above deſcribed, and the miſeries conſequent thereupon. Vice indeed and irreligion, however covered under pretences of piety, have a natural tendency to contempt of government and to anarchy. For an habitual diſregard or tranſgreſſion of divine laws, will render men leſs inclined

to comply with the inſtitutions of human authority.

Hence therefore we may proceed to draw ſome few particular inferences ſuitable to the day, and uſeful to the public body.

And firſt we may learn, let ſenſualiſts urge what they pleaſe, that the regular reſtraints of law are the ſupport of liberty. When laws begin openly to be tranſgreſſed without remorſe, whether by prerogative, or popular inſurrection, liberty in proportion declines of courſe. Reſtraint and liberty may ſeem indeed to be words of contradiction. But law and liberty are not ſo inconſiſtent with each other, as at firſt ſight they may appear. Some reſtraints upon natural liberty will be the ſecurities of moral and civil freedom. Laws of polity were in a great meaſure ordained to preſerve men free: that is, free to chuſe, and execute, what is right and fitting for their nature. For where would be my liberty of action, if every neighbour that ſurrounds me were every day ready, and able with impunity, and without coercion, to impede my choice, or obſtruct the execution of my choice in acting? Or where would be the freedom of my neighbour, if he were in the like manner expoſed to incurſions from me, to the impediments of my hands, in all his under-

undertakings, and the dread of my arm ready to fall every day upon him? The ſame reſtrictions therefore upon *him*, that are neceſſary to preſerve *my* liberty, are likewiſe neceſſary upon *me*, to preſerve *his*. And the ſanctions and intentions of laws within ſtates muſt be impartial and univerſal.

Senſualiſts may murmur under the reſtrictions of laws, becauſe their own irregularities may have made the yoke ſit heavy upon their necks. Which irregularities unreſtrained would ſoon have abridged the liberty of their neighbours. But both moral and civil freedom muſt be ſuch, and ſupported in ſuch manner, as is conſiſtent with the nature of the moral and civil agents themſelves. Nay in reality *all* beings, whether below, or above the degree of human agency, are under ſome kind of obligation to act and purſue what is right in the univerſal ſyſtem; ſo that they cannot well do otherwiſe, either from the imperfection, or inherent perfection of their nature. All below humanity are reſtrained within their ſpheres and orbits by a law of nature, and of natural impulſe. All above humanity are reſtrained by a perfecter law of reaſon. Man is of a mixed, and middle nature, made up of excellencies and imperfections: and ſo written laws are circum-

ſcribed around him, only to keep him right within his ſphere; yet free within that ſphere: to keep the balance equal between his reaſon and paſſion: to preſerve him properly a free-agent, not a ſlave to paſſion: that is, to ſecure his natural, as well as civil liberty, the liberty of his reaſon in both reſpects. And ſo law may be conſidered rather as an *aid* to reaſon, than a *reſtraint* upon reaſon. It points out and inforces that rule of rectitude, which is pointed out, and kept inviolate to ſuperior beings, by ſuperior internal faculties. If obligation to do right, or ſome kind of moral incapacity to do wrong were an impeachment of freedom, the argument might be carried further, and might extend itſelf, pardon the irreverence of the expreſſion, to the Deity himſelf, who by the very perfection of his nature, in the moſt abſolute ſenſe, *can* do *no* wrong.

Laws then, in ſhort, are the walls, that are to keep out the inundations of the waters of ſtrife. And we may learn from hiſtory, that when theſe walls are broken down, and the ſupreme head of the law, is in the vehemence of the ſtorm beaten to the ground, liberty ſtands upon a very precarious foundation.

In

In the next place, it ſhould be our endeavour to wipe off the ſtain, and the reproach brought upon the nation by the horrid execution of this day. It was a tranſaction new, and ſingular in its kind. We have heard of *Athenians*, that baniſhed the ſon of an uſurper; of *Lacedæmonians*, that baniſhed thirty tyrants at once; of *Romans*, that ſtabbed an uſurper in the ſenate. But this is the firſt time that we have heard of legal majeſty thus arraigned in its own courts; of ſupreme majeſty thus formally tried, contemptuouſly treated, and condemned by ſome of the meaneſt of its own ſubjects; of virtuous, exemplary majeſty, thus deliberately beheaded on a public ſcaffold, before its own palace, in the face of its own kingdom.

Let us endeavour, by our future fidelity in allegiance to obliterate this diſgrace! And let us ſtudy, even upon principles of gratitude, as well as ſecurity, to make every good king happy!

Our commonwealth hath been once toſſed, and almoſt totally ſhipwrecked in the gulph of anarchy: God at length was pleaſed to deliver our veſſel from the ſtorm: Let us take heed how ſhe be ever torn from her anchor again!

From the active principles of prevailing influence, which ſtained that unhappy age, ſtates may learn to be upon their guard againſt the extremes either of *no* religion, or *too much*. For enthuſiaſm generally ſung the prelude to moſt of the miſchiefs which were committed in it. And whenever irreligion entered upon the ſtage, hypocriſy was ready to throw over it her maſk of ſanctity.

Enthuſiaſm indeed of any kind is ever inclined to be contentious, and in the operations of ſtrife to break down thoſe boundaries, which ſhould keep out the floods of anarchy. Hypocriſy is ever ready to wear the maſk of any thing: to be either *all* religion, or *no* religion: to appear upon the ſtage, or lurk behind the curtain, as ſhall beſt ſerve her purpoſes.

The exceſſes of religion, or its ape, hypocriſy, in that age, were one cauſe of the great want of religion in the next. For men began to be ſo much diſpleaſed with the hypocritical devotions, and ſanctified iniquities of their fathers, that, aſhamed to wear the garb of religion, they choſe rather to throw off all religion with it. Indeed, the extravagancies of religion, whether ſuperſtition, or enthuſiaſm, have ever had too great a tendency to introduce atheiſm in their rear. For when men

men come once to find a religion to be without reaſon, they will be naturally inclined to think they have reaſon on their ſide to reject religion. Thus the ſame individuals have ſometimes run from one extreme into another. Convinced of their enthuſiaſm, or aſhamed of their former ſuperſtition, they have been induſtrious to recede as far as they could from it, and in the haſtineſs of their flight have found no medium between blind devotion, the goal from whence they ſet out, and poſitive atheiſm.

Let us be careful then, that we ſuffer not true, rational, modeſt religion to be put to the bluſh by the aſſurance of an over-ſanctified face confronting it: and that ſound religion be not undermined by falſe pretences of any head-warm zealots to more religion, than the reſt of mankind deſire or venture to aſſume.

Obſervant likewiſe of the pains, that popery hath ever taken to undermine our religion, and to plant its own tenets in the room; of the part it acted in thoſe days; the numberleſs emiſſaries at this time ſpread abroad in every corner of our kingdom, under different ſhapes and colours, eſpecially in this its great metropolis, ever ready, no doubt, to ſend intelligence of our councils to the enemy,

enemy, let us be zealouſly watchful againſt the incurſions of that dangerous ſuperſtition! Let the ſtate conſider, how unfriendly to princes the religion of *Rome* hath been through ages; and conſequently how precarious the allegiance of her diſciples muſt be, who can excommunicate, and teacheth her votaries to depoſe kings, whenever ſhe pleaſeth, and fair opportunity offereth, for crimes, which ſhe calls hereſy.

Above all, from the viſitations upon the age, we this day recollect, let men rivet in their minds this perſuaſion, that there is a providence preſiding over kingdoms, which can puniſh the licentiouſneſs of a nation as well in the natural product of its own wickedneſs, as ſometimes by immediate judicial interpoſitions. For the natural conſequences of outragious licentiouſneſs, of uncontroled enthuſiaſm, and crafty deſigning hypocriſy, were left to themſelves, and their own free operations, to be the puniſhment of the nation in that corrupt age. A more grievous puniſhment need not have been inflicted!

Let both kings and ſubjects learn, from the fate of that unhappy monarch, whoſe roll of misfortunes was this day ſealed up, that there is an over-ruling providence above princes. The hiſtory of thoſe times convinceth

vinceth us, that, whenever it pleaſeth, it can *refrain the ſpirit of princes, and is wonderful among the kings of the earth.*[c]

Happy is it for us, that we have a king now ſitting on the throne of this realm, who guides himſelf by ſuch a perſuaſion: free at the ſame time from ſuperſtition and enthuſiaſm: who acts under ſerious principles of chriſtian proteſtant religion, as well as of ſtrict moral honour and integrity! Great reaſon have we to pray, not only on this day, but in our conſtant devotions, not only in the temple, but in the cloſet, for the long continuance of a life ſo important to the public welfare!

I could ſpeak of the virtues that irradiate the crown, but that I know I cannot add warmth to your ſentiments upon this head: and I am unwilling to ſoil, what I cannot illuſtrate. I could ſpeak of the virtues transfuſed as it were through the royal blood; if your time would permit: of the praiſes, that recommend the deſcendants of the crown to our moſt ardent loyalty and affection; becauſe they add a luſtre to the great example ſet them from the throne.

[c] Pſ. LXXVI. 12.

But

But pardon my deficiencies! The nation wants not loyal affection, ſo great, and ſo univerſal, as even from ancient days hath ſeldom waited on the ſteps of the throne before. Your patience calls me to conclude; and I ſhall treſpaſs but in one inference, and exhortation further.

If the preacher were indeed ſilent, the preſent condition of the times would itſelf ſpeak aloud, and exhort to unity. As brethren engaged in one common journey, under hazards of war, and ſcarcity of bread, we are admoniſhed by our common parent, our country, *to ſee that we fall not out by the way.*[f]

It was once the praiſe of *Jeruſalem*, a ſtrength and ſtabiliment of that flouriſhing city, then eſteemed *the joy of the whole earth*, that it was *built as a city that is at unity in itſelf.*[g] While that union of heart ſubſiſted, the city flouriſhed: that cement of affections was deſtroyed before the city fell.

Never was there a time, when unanimity among ourſelves was more neceſſary than at preſent. We have a declared and inveterate enemy endeavouring, by all the arts of ſubtle

[f] Gen. xlv. 24. [g] Pſ. cxxii. 3.

infinu-

infinuation and open violence, to undermine, reduce, and deſtroy us. A nation, whoſe determined policy it hath long been to rob us ſilently of the very mine of all our treaſures; of the fountain, that ſupplieth the very nerves of our conſtitution, and the vital juices of our common-wealth, our trade: to ſupplant us in every port, into which they themſelves can ſteal, or force an entrance. A nation, that hath been but too ſucceſsful in crafty, cunning addreſs to ſeduce from us our allies. A nation, that by open aſſault and declared war proceeds to ſpoil us of our colonies, and threaten us with violence at our own doors. Againſt ſuch an enemy it is neceſſary, that we be conjoined in heart, and voice, and hand! When allies are grown unfaithful, and but few are left, let the united body become the moſt faithful ally unto itſelf! Approving at the ſame time its fidelity and attachment to thoſe that remain: ſerious in its deliberations: ſteady in its reſolutions: faithful in its leagues: frugal in its expences: ſpeedy in its executions: ſincerely ſuppliant to the ſupreme lord of all things under all its motions. May every man in his private capacity purſue his own intereſt in national proſperity! Private happineſs

pineſs then will ſoon flow in upon him. May every man in his ſocial capacity be ſtudious to encourage induſtry; to reward virtue; to ſeclude intemperance, idleneſs, and the whole train of habits, qualities, and vices, either unconducive, or pernicious to public welfare, under all their colours of hypocritical pretence, from the juſt retributions due to true ſocial merit: in ſhort, to denominate this common-wealth a vigilant, ſober, active people, whoſe hands are virtuouſly employed; a peaceful brotherhood, whoſe minds have little time to liſten to the voice of diſcord; a wiſe and underſtanding nation; *a generation that ſet their hearts aright; and whoſe ſpirit cleaveth ſtedfaſtly unto God!* [h]

Theſe things, if thou purſueſt with a ſincere heart, ô nation of commerce, then ſhall the ſpices of *Arabia* continue to flow in unto thee: *the abundance of the ſea ſhall be turned unto thee: thy* ſhips *ſhall come from far; they ſhall bring gold and incenſe: the glory of* Lebanon *ſhall come unto thee: the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box together.* [i] *Then ſhall* thy own land *bring forth her increaſe: and God, even our own God, ſhall give us his bleſſing.* [k]

[h] Pſ. LXXVIII. 9. [i] Iſ. LX. 5, 9, 13. [k] Pſ. LXVII. 6.

If,

If, inſtead of ſtrife, which letteth in the waves of confuſion over kingdoms, thy conſtant aim ſhall be to ſow peace on earth, and to confirm good-will among men, inſtead of thorns, thou ſhalt gather olives; and where thiſtles grew, thou ſhalt reap the flower of wheat: inſtead of faſting and lamentation, ſhall be joy within thy gates: and this ſhall be thy ſong and thy triumph, *The Lord of hoſts is with us: the God of* Jacob *is our refuge.*[1]

[1] Pſ. XLVI. 11.

An Explanation of the Difference between the Old and New Stile, in the Commencement of the Year; and the Reaſon of the Regulation made therein by Act of Parliament, in the Year 1751.—*In a Letter to a Perſon of a ſcrupulous Conſcience about keeping ſome of the ſtated Feſtivals of our Church; and —A Familiar Dialogue between a Clergyman and his Pariſhioner.*

GOOD NEIGHBOUR,

YOU ſeem to be uneaſy in your mind, that you are ordered by act of parliament to keep Chriſtmas eleven days ſooner than uſual; and you ſeem to have ſome ſcru-

ple of conſcience about the preſent national obſervance of it. But do you know, that if the ancient chriſtians were right in ſettling the day of our Lord's nativity on the 25th of *December*, we were wrong in keeping it on the 25th of *December*, according to the Old Stile? If they were right in ſettling it on the 25th of *December*, according to *their* Stile, we ſhall be right in keeping it on the 25th, according to our *new* Stile?

This may, at firſt ſight, appear ſomewhat ſtrange to you. But in order to convince you of the truth hereof, let me firſt beg your attention to a few general obſervations, and then apply them.

Let us conſider firſt, what portion of time a year, or a day is; how it is meaſured out to us; and (as your ſcruples are of a religious kind) what account the ſcripture gives us of this matter.

God almighty, the great creator, we know, hath appointed the ſun to meaſure out certain ſeaſons to us. His riſing and ſetting bring on regular day and night. Thus we read, *Gen.* 1. 14. "*And God ſaid, let there be* "*lights in the firmament of the heaven, to* "*divide the day from the night: And let* "*them be for ſigns, and for ſeaſons, and for* "*days and years.*" In our diſtinctions of day

day and night we cannot well err. Our ſenſes there will inevitably guide us; whilſt we have alternately light that conſtitutes the day, and darkneſs that diſtinguiſhes the night. The ſpace of a day and a night, or of alternate light and darkneſs, maketh up what is called a natural day. Thus the ſcripture ſaith, *the evening and the morning were the firſt day*. This portion of time, included in a natural day, comprehends the ſpace of twenty-four hours.

But ſuppoſe now, my good neighbour, that our country had by miſtake, and different from the computation of other countries, taken in, for many years, twenty-five hours into their natural day, inſtead of twenty-four; would you not have thought that they had been in the wrong, and that their way of reckoning ought to be altered? Or elſe would they not reckon the twenty-fifth hour of the firſt day at ſun-riſing of the ſecond? And conſequently would not the firſt hour of that ſecond day begin an hour after the ſun was riſen? The next day would begin two hours after the ſun was riſen, and ſo on; till, in the ſpace of twelve days, the former computed day would continue till the ſun-ſetting of the next ſucceeding one, and ſo on; which would be abſurd. What con-

fuſion would hence ariſe in our computation of days!

Suppoſe again, that inſtead of [a] about twenty-nine days, ſome odd hours and minutes, we ſhould take in thirty days for the periodical revolution of every moon; that is, into the ſpace of time which we reckon between new-moon and new-moon; ſhould we not ſoon be behind the moon? And ſhould we not reckon that time only part of the wain of the old moon, in which the new moon had above a day begun her courſe? Should we not by this means be in the wrong about the new and full of every moon? And ſhould we not in proceſs of time come to reckon that the day of the new moon, on which the moon was really advanced to the full? What confuſion would hence ariſe in the computation of moons!

Suppoſe now, that the error, which we have been before imagining in our computation of days, or moons, ſhould really have been committed in our meaſure of years. This in reality *has* been committed. The apparent courſe of the ſun round the earth is our meaſure of a year. As, according to the book of holy writ above quoted, it was

[a] Twenty-nine days, 12 hours, 44 minutes.

de-

deſigned by providence to be. But we have, by means of the biſſextile, or leap year, taken ſome [b] minutes more into our account of the time of the ſun's yearly courſe, than the ſun takes in performing his courſe. Conſequently the ſun muſt be got again to that point of the heavens from whence he ſet out, every year, ſooner than we ſuppoſe him to be got thither, in the proportion of our account. Conſequently, by this account, we ſhould be ſome minutes behind the ſun in our beginning of every new year. The firſt year we ſhould be in the proportion of eleven minutes behind: the ſecond, eleven more, or two-and-twenty minutes: the third, eleven more, or three-and-thirty minutes; that is, above half an hour behind the ſun; and ſo on. Theſe minutes, you ſee, would ſoon ſwell into hours; and hours would grow into days.

This was really the caſe. From the time of the laſt reformation of the calendar, we were by the Old-Stile got eleven days behind the ſun. The ſhorteſt day would, by the ſun's courſe, come long before it came by the account in the calendar, as it was then ſettled. For at the time when that calendar

[b] See this more fully and familiarly explained in the following Dialogue.

was ſettled, the ſhorteſt day really happened about the 22d of *December*; whereas it came to fall with us, before the alteration of Stile, about the 11th. In the ſame manner the longeſt day, by the ſun's courſe, would come on ſooner than it was ſettled by that calendar. For, whereas it fell in thoſe days about the 22d of *June*, it was come to fall with us about the 11th. The ſeaſons therefore and the calendar would not keep pace together, according to their firſt ſettlement. The ſpring and autumn ſeaſons would vary in like manner from that calendar.

Now if the longeſt and ſhorteſt days came with us eleven days ſooner, than the calendar ſettled by the ancient chriſtians ſuppoſed them to be arrived, *Chriſtmas-day*, or the day when we ſhould keep *Chriſtmas*, would come eleven days ſooner than was ſuppoſed by that calendar. Conſequently we ſhould by our almanack, according to Old-Stile, be eleven days too late in our keeping of *Chriſtmas*, *i. e.* eleven days later than the ancient Chriſtians were. Foreign nations ſaw this; and they corrected their Stile. Why ſhould we obſtinately continue in the wrong, and keep Chriſtmas after other nations had kept theirs, when we knew ourſelves to be in the wrong? Eſpecially as the correction was ſo eaſy, by only

only leaving out *once* the nomination of eleven days out of the almanack.

If you think, that our Lord was born on the 25th of *December*, or that the firſt chriſtians did right in ſettling his nativity on that day, why ſhould you be deſirous of keeping it on the day, when *they* ſuppoſed he was *not* born? Why ſhould you be deſirous of keeping it on the day, which, according to *their* reckoning, would have been the 5th of *January?* For the New-Stile only brings *our* almanack to be conformable to what *theirs* was, our *Chriſtmas-day* to coincide with theirs, our *New-year's day* to agree with theirs, and with that of moſt other modern chriſtian nations.

You ſee then, good neighbour, if you are religiouſly ſcrupulous about this point of time, and deſirous to keep *Chriſtmas* on the ſame portion of the year when the ancient chriſtians, and they who firſt ſettled your calendar, kept it, you cannot keep it right, if you keep it according to the Old-Stile. Becauſe by that Stile *Chriſtmas* will fall eleven days later, than in the times of the ancient chriſtians; and conſequently later than the day, when thoſe, by whom you would be guided, appointed it to be kept. For the new year had been begun eleven days when we reck-

oned the laſt of the old; or, in other words, the ſun was come to that part of the heavens, from whence his new year was to begin, eleven days ſooner than we ſuppoſed him to be got thither. Therefore in our reckoning we were got eleven days behind the ſun. *The ſhadow of our dial* was, in reality, *gone backward* eleven days; as if we counted it but *one* o'clock in the morning, when in reality it was *twelve* at noon. We reckoned that but the *firſt* day of *January*, which was in reality the *twelfth:* conſequently we reckoned *that* but the 25th of *December* which was really the 5th of *January*, and which ought to be ſo eſteemed.

You ſee from hence, good neighbour, that according to the Old-Stile you kept *Chriſtmas* eleven days later than the ancient chriſtians kept it. The 25th of *December* came eleven days later than it did in their time. What then had you to do, but to leave out the naming of eleven days, out of ſome part of your year, in order to ſet you right? This was no more than ſetting your clock forward when it was too ſlow; or ſetting the hand at once to the right hour, paſſing over the intermediate figures.

Would you willingly have the hand of your clock ſtand at four or five in the morning,

ing, when it ought to ſtand at twelve at noon? Or ſhould you think it any crime to move it forwards? Why then ſhould you ſuffer your almanack to point out to you only the firſt day of the month, when it ought to point to you the twelfth? Or is it any ſin to advance the calendar forwards to the true time, by leaving out the nomination of ſo many days? Which is no more, in effect, than moving the hand of your clock at once over ſo many figures, when you knew that it pointed wrong. This is no more than to bring your calendar, and the hand of your clock together to true time. This will bring you to the time of celebrating our Lord's nativity, when the ancient chriſtians ſolemnized it; if that be the point you aim at. This will bring you to the *right* time of celebrating it, if *they* were right in fixing it to the 25th of *December*.

I only ſay if they were right: For I will not venture to affirm, that the ancient chriſtians were infallibly certain of the day; or that our Lord was indubitably born upon that Day. No; they came as near the time as they could; and were ſatisfied with ſuch obſervance. If you would approach as near as you can, in conformity to their appoint-

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ment, you muſt correct your Stile; that is, you muſt follow the New-Stile; or you will not keep your *Chriſtmas* when *they* did; and when they intended that chriſtians ſhould keep it. Your clock, or, in other words, your calendar, is now ſet forward by the New-Stile: Your time will now go on regularly again, with that of other nations.

Beſides, you never kept *Chriſtmas-day* preciſely on the ſame day for four years together, during the authority of the Old Stile; which perhaps you may not be aware of. For before this alteration of the Stile, *Chriſtmas-day* in every leap-year was kept a day later than in the three foregoing years; an additional day being inſerted in the end of *February*; conſequently the firſt day of *March*, and every following day, of courſe *Chriſtmas-day*, being put a day backwarder in that year, than in the three preceding ones. You ſee then, that before this alteration of Stile, you did not keep *Chriſtmas-day* on the ſame day of the year conſtantly four years together. And if you thought it no harm to remove it one day, for the ſake of bringing it near to true time, why ſhould you think it any to remove it forwards for *once* eleven days, for the ſake of bringing it

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ſtill nearer to true time? What has been ſaid of *Chriſtmas* may with the ſame reaſon be applied to all the fixed immoveable feaſts, which will be equally affected thereby. By the new calendar the moveable feaſts likewiſe, as that of *Eaſter*, and the like, are brought nearer to true time; nearer to the time appointed for the keeping of *Eaſter*, among the ancient chriſtians, by the famous council of *Nice*.

Let me here obſerve, that it was probably the intention of the ancient chriſtians, when they fixed the days of our ſtated feſtivals, to contrive, that ſome of the greater feaſts ſhould fall in with ſome remarkable periods relative to the ſeaſons, as they ſtood marked in the *Julian* calendar. For thus we find, that as they ſuppoſed our Lord to be born about that ſeaſon of the year when the days are ſhorteſt, they fixed the feſtival of his nativity on the 25th of *December*; which was preciſely marked as the ſhorteſt day in the ancient *Julian* calendar, ſettled by *Julius Cæſar*. Conſequently, the day of *Annunciation*, which we call *Lady-day*, would naturally fall on the period of equal day and night in the ſpring ſeaſon, which we find exactly fixed to the 25th of *March* in the old *Julian* calendar. The feſtival of St. *John* the Baptiſt, the forerunner of our Lord, was fixed preciſely to that, which

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was pointed out as the longeſt day, in the ſame calendar.

Chriſtmas-day then was probably intended to be kept on the ſhorteſt day, which by the *Julian* calendar was fixed to the 25th of *December*, though it really fell at the time of the council of *Nice* about the 22d. You perceive then how far we were deviated, by the Old-Stile, from the time on which the ancient chriſtians ſuppoſed our Lord to be born. They fixed his nativity on the ſuppoſed ſhorteſt day. The ſhorteſt day at the time of the council of *Nice* really fell about the 22d, however they might comply with the *Julian* calendar. Whereas, according to the Old-Stile, in our days, it was come to fall about the 11th. Conſequently we kept *Chriſtmas* ſo many days, as intervened between *their* ſhorteſt day and *ours*, later than they intended it ſhould be kept; which would be eleven days at leaſt.

Conſider impartially what has been ſaid! Be not poſitive againſt the nature of things! But pay ſome deference to the judgment of thoſe who do, and who ought to underſtand the nature of the ſun's courſe, the true meaſure of time, and of a year, better than thoſe who have not been converſant in ſuch ſtudies.

If in ſhort, good neighbour, your objections to the New-Stile, or the preſent time of keeping

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ing *Chriſtmas*, proceed upon religious motives, ſhould you not rather be thankful to that noble, learned, and ingenious Lord[c], who was principally inſtrumental in contriving a method to ſet you right in time, than unreaſonably adhere to thoſe, who, againſt the courſe of nature, againſt ancient obſervance, and preſent authority, would obſtinately keep you wrong?

I wiſh well to your momentous intereſts in all reſpects, temporal and religious; both thoſe which relate to the time which now is, and that future part of time, which ſhall no more be meaſured by the ſun's courſe; being with great ſincerity,

Your moſt faithful,

and affectionate Servant,

W. P.

[c] The Right Hon. the Earl of Macclesfield.

A Dialogue between a Clergyman and his Pariſhioner; wherein the Reaſons are given for the late Alteration of the Stile by Act of Parliament.

Par. I Should be glad, Sir, to be informed by you, what is the meaning of the New-Stile, or the reaſon for the alteration of Stile?

Cler. The intention is to bring our year forward to true time, according to the ſun's *yearly* courſe, as we compute our *day* by the ſun's *daily* courſe; that we may compute our time according to the true meaſure of a year, and as moſt other chriſtian nations, throughout *Europe*, now compute theirs.

Par. What is the true meaſure of a year?

Cler. A year is that ſpace of time which the ſun takes in moving apparently round the earth from one point of the heavens, till it returns to the ſame point again.

Par. In what length of time is this revolution performed?

Cler.

Cler. In 365 days, 5 hours, and 49 minutes, that is, almoſt 365 days, and 6 hours. But as we cannot well meaſure a year in common uſe, but by whole days, therefore the 5 hours, and 49 minutes, are not taken into the reckoning of a common civil year.

Par. What would be the conſequence of this omiſſion, if no regard at all were ever taken of the remaining 5 hours, and 49 minutes?

Cler. The odd 5 hours, and 49 minutes, which are nearly 6 hours, wanting only eleven minutes, being conſtantly omitted in the reckoning, would in four years amount almoſt to a whole day; for four times 6 hours is equal to 24 hours, or a natural day: Conſequently at that rate we ſhould every four years get a day before the ſun; that is, as we reckoned leſs time by ſix hours for the ſun's yearly courſe, than he really took, we ſhould every four years begin our new year a whole day before the ſun. In eight years, two days before the ſun; in 32 years, eight days before the ſun; in 64 years, 16 days before the ſun; and in 128 years, above a month before the ſun; and ſo on: which in proceſs of years would make vaſt confuſion in our computation of ſeaſons, and carry at length *December* into ſummer.

Par.

Par. What inconveniences would ariſe from hence?

Cler. One main end and uſe of a regular calendar is, that it may point out to us, at firſt view, the ſeaſon of the year, according to the ſun's courſe, by the reſpective day of the month: that the huſbandman, by the ſight of his almanack, may know when to begin his labours in the field, to ſow in time, that he may reap in ſeaſon: And the mariner may know the proper time to ſet ſail for ſea, according to the courſe of his intended voyage. But if the calendar vary from the ſun's real courſe, which it was intended in effect to point out, the uſe thereof will be loſt: It will become deceitful, inſtead of being ſerviceable and very convenient to man. Many conveniences to the farmer depend upon an agreement between the calendar and the ſeaſon. If they come to differ by any conſiderable time, the Fair, for inſtance, may be appointed, by the ſtated day in the almanack, for the ſale of his wool, before his ſheep are fit to be ſheared: A Fair may be appointed for the ſale of fruits before they are fit to be gathered; or for cheeſe, or cattle, before they are come to their perfection, fit for ſale. Therefore you may obſerve, it is provided, upon the preſent alteration of Stile, that the days of many fairs

ſhould be changed in proportion to that alteration. But a perpetual variation of the times of fairs, in every town, for different fruits, and produce of the earth, according to the variation of the almanack from the ſun's courſe, would have been troubleſome. Theſe inconveniences, I ſay, would ſoon have ariſen, if no notice had been taken of the 5 hours and 49 minutes, to compleat the time of the ſun's courſe, in the meaſure of a year.

Par. What was done to ſet this matter right?

Cler. Why, finding that the odd hours and minutes would thus in four years make up almoſt a whole day, we in the common reckoning of our calendar, according to Old-Stile, ſuppoſed them to do ſo; reckoning them roundly full ſix hours every year, and ſo making the common year to conſiſt of 365 days, we every fourth year added a day at the end of *February*, aſſigning to that month 29 days, inſtead of 28; and ſo making that year to conſiſt of 366 days. This in our almanacks is called biſſextile year, from a word of *Latin* derivation; and in our common *Engliſh* language, leap-year.

Par. But do you not then in this caſe reckon every year eleven minutes too much? For juſt now you ſaid, that the true ſolar year con-

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ſiſted only of 365 days, 5 hours, and 49 minutes; whereas at preſent by this additional day, every leap year, we ſuppoſe it to conſiſt of 365 days, in full round reckoning: do we not then every year take eleven minutes too much into our account?

Cler. You are very right: this was really the caſe; and this made the neceſſity of altering our Stile. For though the introduction of leap-year went a good way towards bringing the civil year, and that of the ſun's courſe to agree together, yet in proceſs of time, and eſpecially as the ſtudy of aſtronomy has been more improved, imperfections were ſtill found, even after this amendment, and ſuch as being uncorrected would render us liable to great inconveniences.

Par. Pray give me ſome clear account of this matter, that I may have a right notion of it; for at preſent I do not conceive it ſo perfectly as I could wiſh.

Cler. I will endeavour to do ſo, as I think it my duty. Our year then, by means of the leap-year, you ſay, would be too long by eleven minutes. Theſe conſtantly repeated minutes would in three years amount to above half an hour: in ſix years to above an hour; and in about 130 years to a whole day. This you will ſee by the common rule of multipli-

cation of eleven minutes into any number of years: conſequently in about 130 years we ſhould begin our year a day too late; in about 260 years, two days too late; and ſo on: and ſince the reformation of our calendar, by the public council of *Nice*, about 1400 years ago, we were become eleven days too late in the beginning of our new year by the Old-Stile; and conſequently in our celebration of the fixed feſtivals of Chriſtmas, and the like; and were going on into further error.

Par. But where would be the private or national inconvenience, if the Stile had not been altered?

Cler. We were certainly wrong, and were going on to be more ſo in our computation of ſeaſons. For as any fixed day of the month in the calendar, without the inſertion of leap-year, would have come on too ſoon in reſpect to the ſeaſons, the calendar year being then too ſhort; ſo after the introduction of leap-year, by the Old-Stile, it would have come on too late, the calendar year being then too long. The ſame inconveniencies conſequently would have enſued as in the forementioned caſe, from a diſagreement between the calendar and the ſeaſons; only in a longer ſpace of time: and as the variation would have come on more ſlowly, it would have been leſs ſenſibly

ſibly perceived, than in the former caſe. Yet it had proceeded ſo far, as to be very manifeſtly perceived. Great inconveniencies began to ariſe. A very material one, with reſpect to ourſelves was, that as moſt foreign *European* nations had reformed their Stile, we differed from them eleven days, which would create frequent vaſt confuſion and diſadvantage to our merchants in their accounts, difficulties in ſettling the dates of compacts, ſales, purchaſes, uſe of goods, intereſt of money lent, treaties, and other matters between perſons of different nations.

Par. I begin now to ſee the uſe and reaſon of introducing the New-Stile into our kingdom by public authority.

Cler. The deſign was, I ſay, to remedy theſe inconveniencies, and to prevent greater, by leaving out only for *once* the naming of eleven days out of our almanack, in the year 1752, and providing in a proper manner by a due regulation of our calendar for the future, only as to the inſertion or omiſſion of the ſingle additional day of leap-year, after the rate of once in about 130 years, that we may not be liable to the like miſtake in time again: ſo that our calendar will now keep pace with that of other chriſtian nations: we ſhall compute our time with them; and keep our

feſtivals

feſtivals with them; be immediately acquainted with the dates of their tranſactions, and leſs ſubject to miſtakes in our traffic with them; our fairs will now return regularly with their reſpective ſeaſons, upon the ſame days of the month.

Par. I thank you, ſir, for this inſtruction, and am now ſatisfied that the parliament did very right in altering the Stile; if for no other reaſon, yet eſpecially as we are a trading nation, and the proſperity of the whole kingdom, of the farmer as well as of the citizen, depends upon the eaſe and convenience of traffic.

THE END.